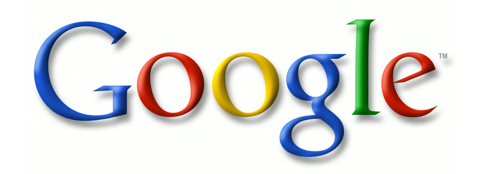
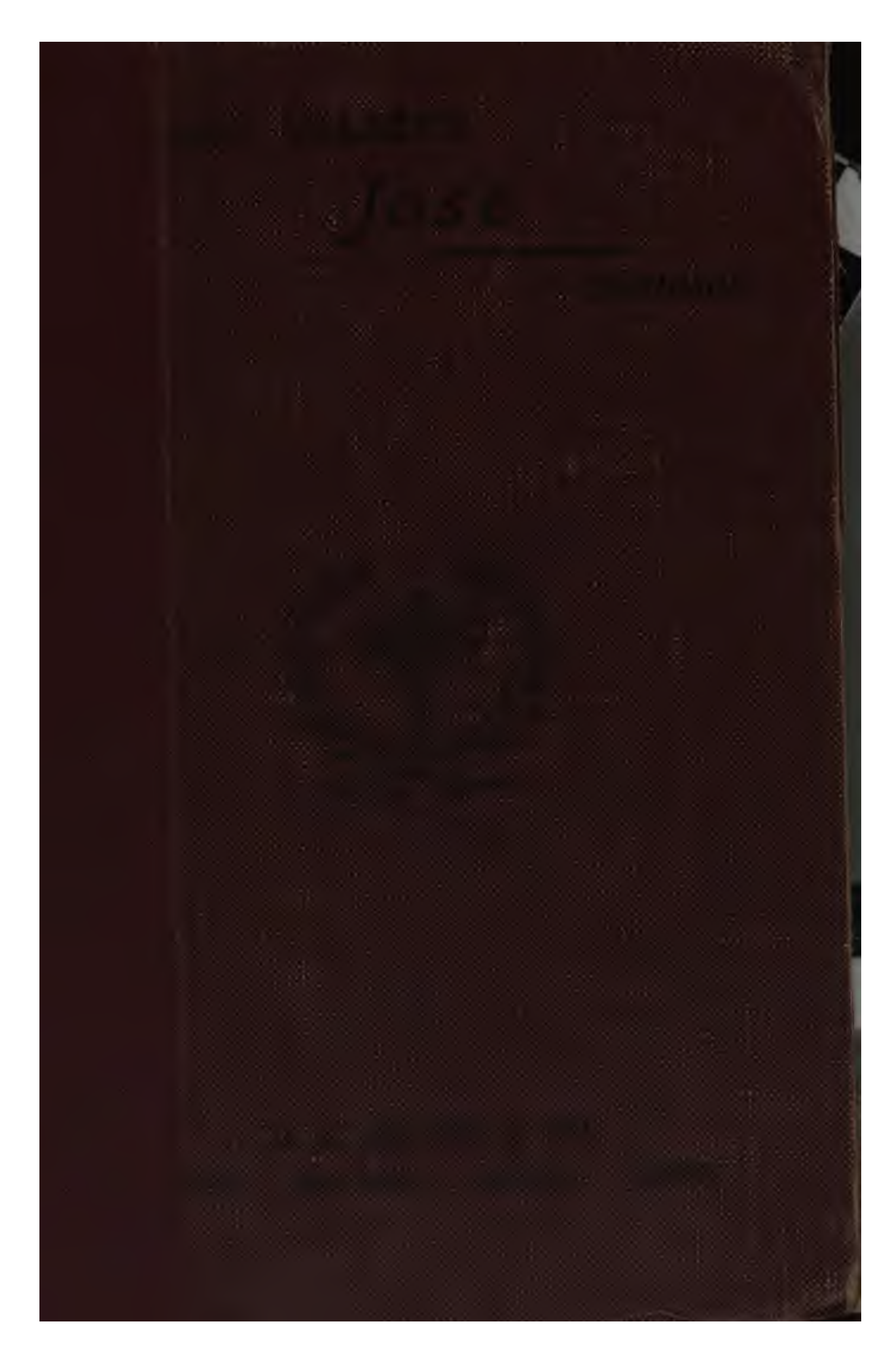
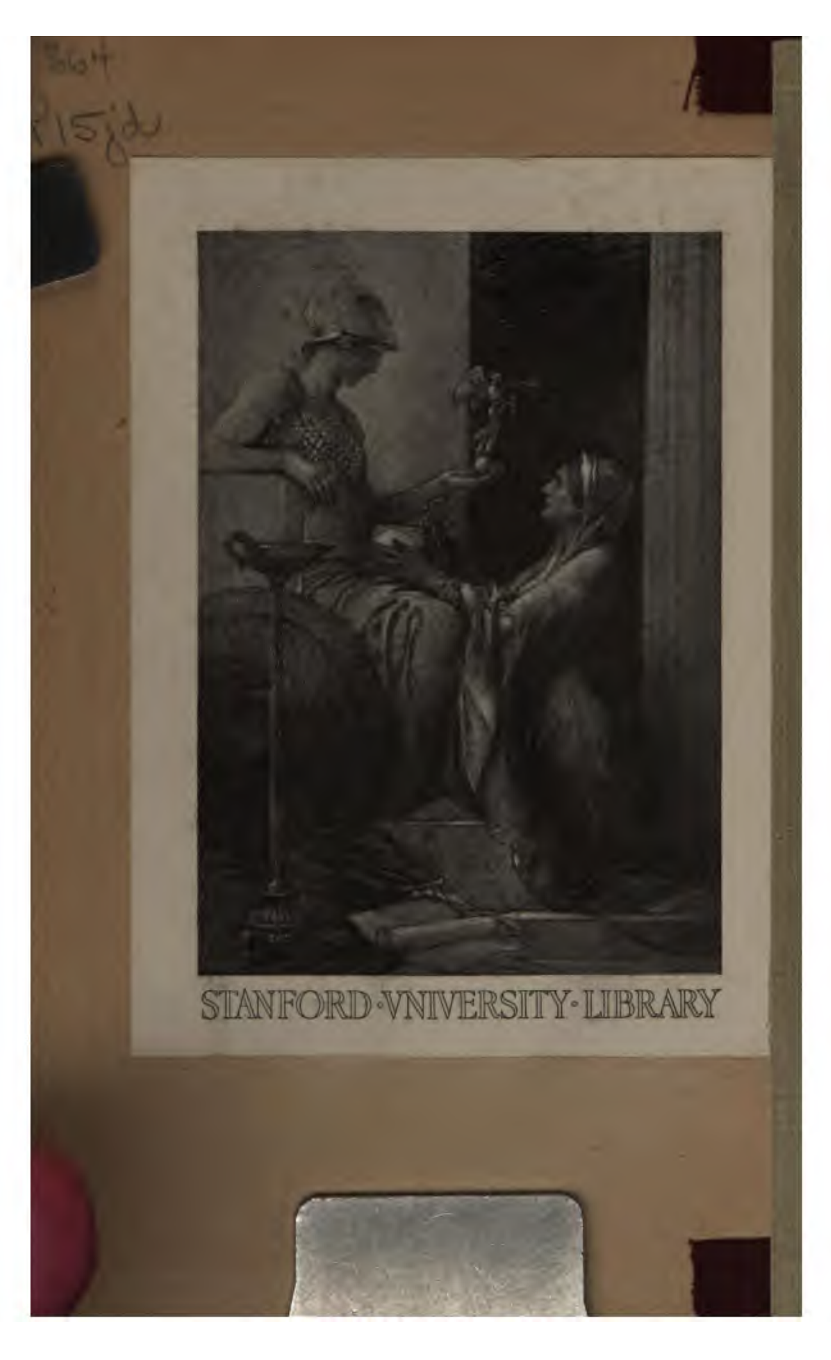



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JOSÉ

POR

ARMANDO PALACIO VALDÉS

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

F. J. A. DAVIDSON, Ph.D.
While Associate Professor of Italian and Spanish in the University of Toronto

AND WITH A VOCABULARY

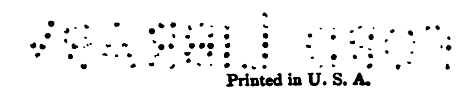
BY

ALICE P. F. HUBBARD, M.A.



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PREFACE

The present text was chosen for an annotated edition as being both good literature and good material for learning Spanish. It is hoped that the experience of those who may use the book will justify the choice. It is intended more particularly to follow the study of a reader or its equivalent; but there is no reason why it should not adapt itself to other stages of Spanish study, according as longer or shorter recitations are assigned, and more or less aid given by the instructor.

The purpose of the introduction is simply to "introduce" the student to the author and his work, to convey some idea of their importance and to incite to further acquaintance with both. Nevertheless I believe that scholars will welcome the new information on the life of Sr. Valdés.

The text is that of the sole Spanish edition (Madrid, 1885), the new edition in the *Obras Completas* now in course of publication not having yet appeared. I have, however, beside correction of errata, changed two words and omitted ten to better adapt the text for class use.

In the notes I have aimed to explain all serious difficulties. With their aid and that of grammar and dictionary the student should be able to present a correct translation. I have, however, by no means ex-

hausted possibilities in annotation, believing that the reading of a text should not be a mere recitation, preferring that the interested student should have an opportunity to exercise his ability and apply the knowledge already acquired, and holding also that many explanations are better retained when given orally by the teacher to his class.

I am happy to acknowledge here the generous aid of Professor W. H. Fraser of the University of Toronto, who examined the MS. of the notes and offered numerous valuable suggestions, not a few of which have been adopted, and also, and most particularly my debt of gratitude to the author of *José*, who so kindly accorded his sanction to this edition, who placed at my disposal hitherto unpublished biographical data, who furnished me some information otherwise inaccessible, and who by his friendly encouragement stimulated me to the completion of my work.

F. J. A. D.

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA,
Jan. 10, 1900.

NOTE TO EDITION OF 1909. — A vocabulary has been added in response to a considerable demand. Miss Alice P. F. Hubbard, of the University of Texas, kindly undertook the making of this vocabulary, from which I was prevented by pressure of other work. I have, however, revised the MS. and read the proof, and can heartily commend Miss Hubbard's work to users of this book. Text and notes have also been revised and a few errors eliminated.

Since the appearance of the first edition Señor Valdés has produced two excellent novels: *La Aldea Perdida*, and *Tristán, ó el Pesimismo*, and a series of his *Obras Completas* is now in course of publication. The list of studies on this author has also increased, and for additional bibliography I take the liberty of referring to the scholarly edition of *La Alegría del Capitán Ribot* by Messrs. Morrison and Churchman (D. C. Heath & Co.).

F. J. A. D.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO.

INTRODUCTION*

ARMANDO PALACIO VALDÉS was born on the 4th of October, 1853, at the village of Entralgo, in the mountains of Asturias, where his parents possessed a country-house and surrounding estate. His mother belonged to an old family of landed gentry. His father, a lawyer by profession, was in temperament emotional, and endowed with much imagination and an extraordinary talent for story-telling; these qualities rendered his society so agreeable that he attracted the sympathies of all who approached him. Sr. Valdés has said of his father, with characteristic modesty: "If I possessed but the half of his imagination and narrative talent I do not doubt that I should be a good novelist."

Most of the members of his mother's family resided in Avilés (a maritime town of Asturias, described in *Marta y María* under the name of Nieva), and between this town and Entralgo the Valdés alternated their residence, passing the winter in the former and the summer in the latter. Thus early the future novelist learned to know the life of sea-faring folk and also that of country people and farmers.

At the age of twelve he began his secondary education at Oviedo, where he was under the care of a paternal uncle. This

* Bibliography: P. Francisco Blanco García, La Literatura Española en el siglo XIX, Madrid, 1891; H. Butler Clarke, Spanish Literature, London and New York, 1893; J. Fitzmaurice Kelly, Spanish Literature, London, 1898; M. Bordes, Étude préliminaire in French translation of El Maestrante, by J. Gaure, Paris, 1899; W. D. Howells, Harper's Magazine, April, 1886, and November, 1886, London Chronicle, Aug. 10th, 1894.

city, the capital of Asturias, is described in *El Maestrante* under the name of Lancia. Although entering fully into the pleasures of school life he was a faithful student, and soon acquired a taste for both science and literature, aided in no small degree by the stimulus of other eager youths whose acquaintance he made. His friends, however, considered at this time that he was better endowed for the former.

At seventeen he went to Madrid to begin the study of law, to which he devoted himself with great enthusiasm. His sole ambition now was to become a professor of political economy. He was admitted to membership in the famous literary and scientific club *El Ateneo*, studying deeply in its library and taking an active part in its labors. Before the end of his law course he was elected first secretary of the section of moral and political science of that association.

Sr. Valdés celebrated his admission to the bar by the publication of several articles on philosophic and political subjects which attracted the attention of the proprietor of the *Revista Europea*, at that time the most important scientific periodical in Spain. In spite of his extreme youth — he was then but twenty-two years of age — the editorship of this review was entrusted to him, and he successfully fulfilled its duties for three years.

Nothing as yet made the young editor imagine that he was to become a novelist. But in order to add to the interest of his publication he began to produce a series of literary portraits of orators, poets and novelists. This task revived the literary inclinations of his early years, and abandoning the control of the *Revista*, he wrote his first novel, *El Señorito Octavio*, a work which the author himself regards as of little merit, too lyric, and marred by a straining after effect. His friends, however, were quick to see the talent displayed, and their encouragement stimulated the production of a second novel, *Marta y María*, which is perhaps the best known of all. It was the occasion of the author's introduction to the American

public through an article by Mr. W. Dean Howells in Harper's Magazine.

Since then Sr. Valdés has continued to produce new novels at the rate of one each year or every two years. Those which have enjoyed the greatest popularity in Spain are *La Hermana San Sulpicio* and *Los Majos de Cádiz*, novels of Andalusian life, in spite of the author's not being a native of that province.

In the summer of 1882 Sr. Valdés met, in the small coast-town of Candás, Asturias, a young lady of fifteen, Luisa Prendes of Gijón (the Sarrió of *El Cuarto Poder*), who in the year following became his wife. The newly wedded pair established their household in Madrid, but were not destined long to enjoy their happiness, for eighteen months after their marriage Sra. Valdés expired in the arms of her husband, leaving him an infant son nine months old. This fatal event is the most important in the life of our author. From this time on he has lived devoted to his son, reading, writing, and retired from all political and literary commotion.

Such are the biographical data which Sr. Valdés has thought fit to give to the public. More personal details he has not divulged, such "confessions" appearing to him both absurd and a profanation. But there is a key of which those who are interested in the life and character of the novelist may avail themselves, without violating his reserve. This key he gives us himself in a sentence which vindicates the personality of all art, "subjective" or "objective," realistic or romantic. "We novelists," he says, "write our biography, though disguisedly, in the works which we create." And he adds: "In mine is found almost all that has affected me in my life, but most particularly in *Maximina*."

The following are, in chronological order, the novels of Valdés, produced between the years 1881–1899; *El Señorito Octavio*, 1 vol.; *Marta y María*, 1 vol.; *El Idilio de un enfermo*, 1 vol.; *José*, 1 vol.; *Aguas fuertes* (*novelas y cuadros*), 1 vol; *Riverita*, 2 vols.; *Maximina*, 2 vols.; *El Cuarto Poder*,

2 vols.; *La Hermana San Sulpicio*, 2 vols.; *La Espuma*, 2 vols.; *La Fe*, 1 vol.; *El Maestrante*, 1 vol.; *El Origen del Pensamiento*, 1 vol.; *Los Majos de Cádiz*, 1 vol.; *La Alegría del Capitán Ribot*, 1 vol.

Beside these he has written the following critical works: *Los Oradores del Ateneo*, 1 vol., 1878; *Los Novelistas Españoles*, 1 vol., 1878; *Nuevo Viaje al Parnaso*, 1 vol., 1879; *La Literatura en 1881*, 1 vol., in collaboration with Leopoldo Alas.

Valdés, if we must classify him, belongs to the ranks of realism. In fact, Mr. J. Fitzmaurice Kelly declares that "he has a fair claim to rank as the chief of the modern naturalistic school." But we must hasten to modify this definition by restriction in one direction, amplification in another. This modification is necessary because Valdés has known how to maintain his originality amid the strife of schools, the seductions of praise, and the onslaught of adverse criticism. Blanco García speaks of him as a convert to naturalism, but we feel that his literary creed as manifested practically in his novels, theoretically in the prefaces to *Marta y María* and *La Hermana San Sulpicio*, is the result of a natural bent of mind foreshadowed in his early affection for science, just as we may trace much of his fine description and character-drawing to his early observation of city, sea and country. To differentiate in the novelist what he derives from the general point of view which he has adopted from the measure of originality which marks his work, is the real difficulty in attempting to characterize Valdés.

He chooses his material throughout from contemporary Spanish life. His work is based on an exactness of observation that shows him to have thoroughly studied the *milieux* which he describes. His *tertulias*, aristocratic or plebeian, the envies and vanities, the petty intrigues, the fervors of religion, feigned or real, the flirtations and grand passions, all pulsate with life and truth, no less than the setting of nature

with which his characters are so intimately interwoven that it seems as much a part of them as their words and acts. "The labor of Palacio amounts to cutting from the immeasurable canvas of reality heterogeneous portions, of warp coarse or fine, smooth or rough, according to the order in which they attract his eye, and demand the embroidery of his fancy and his pen."* In the choice of these "sections" we can divine the predilections of the artist. He is an optimist at heart and believes in the possibility of human nobleness, and so prefers the brighter colors of his palette. Not that his pictures lack in shadow: as a faithful novelist he does not hesitate to describe scenes of gloom and even horror, when they form naturally part of the story; he does so undeterred by any scruple. But though he believes that everything is worthy of being painted, he does not insist too much upon unpleasant detail, and often, as in the account of the quarrel between the mothers of José and Elisa in the present novel, cuts short a description of the ugly and sordid and turns with relief to brighter things. Even his baser characters, whose defects are brought out with remorseless justice, are not lacking in all human virtue and not seldom are explained, if not excused, by heredity or the circumstances of their environment. Valdés has a wide knowledge of life and though as a true realist he abstains from personal comment, we feel that he deeply sympathizes with human nature. For him *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. It is with shafts of gentle irony that he transfixes human foibles, an irony softened by the play of a delicate humor which is one of the most potent charms of his work. Valdés too, is a poet and knows how, not to idealize, but to emphasize the ideal and æsthetic elements that exist already in the most ordinary life, to weave from them a veil of poetry which softens the too familiar features of prose.

There has been a steady development in the work of this author. Not so much in style, of which he has shown himself

* Blanco García.

a master almost from the outset of his literary career. Not so much, either, in ideas, literary or general, though he never repeats himself, and each succeeding work brings to light new treasures of his mind. Rather should we say that his understanding of life has grown more comprehensive and more calm, and that he gives us more and more of his originality and less and less of the phase of literature which he still undoubtedly represents. In a recent letter to the present editor he says, apropos of *El Capitán Ribot:* "*Verá V. que me aparto cada día más del gusto predominante en la literatura moderna.*" There is more synthesis of character, less analysis, and a distinct philosophy, indicated in earlier works, begins to stand out clearly as the final rounding of his view of life. It is a philosophy of sublime morality for its own sake and because immorality is fatal, the philosophy of a man who believes in the sanity of virtue and the wholesomeness of work, and who abhors sin without the hopes and fears inspired by theology. For Valdés is not orthodox; more than one of his novels is iconoclastic in this respect; but such is his sympathetic comprehension of attitudes of faith that we feel that his religion is deep and pure in spite of its dispensing with creed.

Blanco García has only words of praise for *José*. He calls it "an idyll of truth, impregnated with the most chaste tenderness." "Valdés," he says, "shows himself penetrated by the panoramas of the sea and coast, and studies affectionately the manners and customs of a fishing-village, and an every-day story of two young people crossed in love, which furnishes the basic theme. The struggles of José, the chief character, who lends his name to the book, with his vixenish mother, with the rigors of fate and the fury of the waves, to gain the hand of his adored Elisa, and the heroism with which he suffers, and resigns himself, and triumphs over adversity, lend to the novel an epic hue, combined with realistic exactitude and beautified by the aureole of religious feeling." No less interesting, though in a different way, are the cold and calculating *señá* Isabel, the henpecked

schoolmaster, and above all D. Fernando, the decayed nobleman, the incongruities of whose situation afford full scope to the author's sympathetic humor. Mr. Howells finds room for criticism in the final treatment of this character. "The author," he says, "helps himself out with a romantic and superfluous bit of self-sacrifice, and spoils the pleasure of the judicious in his work by the final behavior of an otherwise admirably studied hidalgo." It seems to us, on the contrary, that the *dénouement* was indicated: compelled to abandon the home of his race, and having accomplished his final mission of uniting the much-tried lovers, he dies, without dishonor, leaving behind him a grateful memory in the hearts of his friends.

It was in critical work that Valdés first essayed his powers, prior to entering upon his career as a novelist. This early criticism is somewhat destructive in trend, but valuable as showing a thorough knowledge of the subjects treated and also "a fineness of touch, a delicacy of irony and a correct taste,"* which have not abandoned him in his later work.

The style of Valdés is sure and simple, devoid like the personality of the author of all pose. There is no unnecessary expansion of descriptions, nor any useless display of erudition, although on occasion he gives evidence of wide reading. *La Fe* particularly shows him versed alike in theology and philosophy, nor would it be easy to find a better comprehension of mysticism. His composition is equally balanced. As a rule, each character, each episode is treated within the limits of its importance. There is neither haste nor a too fond dwelling on detail; if there be a defect, it is on the side of sobriety: we could readily forgive his arresting the course of the story for the sake of a few more descriptions such as that at the end of Chapter VI. of the present novel.

Valdés' work has been greatly admired both at home and abroad: on the whole, perhaps, he has won more consideration

* Blanco García

out of Spain than in it. This is perhaps natural, seeing his heterodoxy in matters of religion and the conservatism of his countrymen in this respect. In Spain, as has been stated, his two Andalusian novels have been most popular. In England *La Espuma* and *Maximina* are best known. In America we are most familiar with *Marta y María*, *Maximina* and *La Hermana San Sulpicio*, through the translations of Mr. Nathan Haskell Dole. In France, Germany, Russia, Sweden, Holland and Bohemia translations of different of his works have seen the light. This international fame may well be taken as a prophecy of the future. The relative youth of the author allows us to hope for still greater things from his pen. But though his career is not yet closed, and though we lack the perspective of time to enable us to form a final judgment, this much may already be regarded as certain, that the novelist has attained a position in the literature of his country which posterity will recognize and honor.

JOSÉ

Si algún día venís á la provincia de Asturias,[1] no os vayáis sin echar una ojeada á Rodillero.[2] Es el pueblo más singular y extraño de ella, ya que no[3] el más hermoso. Y todavía en punto á belleza considero que se las puede haber[4] con cualquier otro, aunque no sea ésta la opinión general. La mayoría de las personas, cuando hablan de Rodillero, sonríen con lástima, lo mismo que cuando se mienta en la conversación á[5] un cojo ó corcovado ó á otro mortal señalado de modo ridículo por la mano de Dios. Es una injusticia. Confieso que Rodillero no es gentil, pero es sublime, lo cual importa más.

Figuraos que camináis por una alta meseta de la costa, pintoresca y amena como el resto del país: desparramados por ella vais encontrando blancos caseríos, medio ocultos entre el follaje de los árboles, y quintas, de cuyas huertas cuelgan en piños[6] sobre el camino las manzanas amarillas sonrosadas; un arroyo cristalino serpea por el medio, esparciendo amenidad y frescura; delante tenéis la gran mancha azul del océano; detrás las cimas lejanas de algunas montañas que forman oscuro y abrupto cordón en torno de la campiña, que es dilatada y llana. Cerca ya de la mar, comenzáis á descender rápidamente, siguiendo el arroyo, hacia un barranco negro y adusto: en el fondo está Rodillero.

Pero este barranco se halla cortado en forma de hoz, y ofrece no pocos tramos y revueltas[1] antes de desembocar en el océano. Las casuchas que componen el pueblo están enclavadas por entrambos lados en la misma peña, pues las altas murallas que lo cierran no dan espacio más que[2] para el arroyo y una estrecha calle que lo ciñe: calle y arroyo van haciendo eses,[3] de suerte que algunas veces os encontraréis con la montaña por delante, escucharéis los rumores de la mar detrás de ella y no sabréis por dónde seguir para verla: el mismo arroyo os lo irá diciendo. Salváis aquel tramo, pasáis por delante de otro montón de casas colocadas las unas encima de las otras en forma de escalinata,[4] y de nuevo dais con[5] la peña cerrándoos el paso. Los ruidos del océano se tornan[6] más fuertes, la calle se va ensanchando: aquí tropezáis con una lancha que están carenando, más allá con algunas redes tendidas en el suelo; percibiréis el olor nauseabundo de los residuos podridos del pescado; el arroyo corre más sucio y sosegado, y flotan sobre él algunos botes: por fin, al revolver de una peña[7] os halláis frente al mar. El mar penetra, al subir, por la oscura garganta engrosando el arroyo. La playa que deja descubierta al bajar no es de arena, sino de guijo. No hay muelle ni artefacto alguno para abrigar las embarcaciones: los marineros cuando tornan de la pesca se ven precisados á subir sus lanchas á la rastra[8] hasta ponerlas á seguro.

Rodillero es un pueblo de pescadores. Las casas, por lo común, son pequeñas y pobres y no tienen vistas más que por delante; por detrás se las quita la peña á donde están adosadas.[9] Hay algunas menos malas, que pertenecen á las pocas personas de lustre[10] que

habitan en el lugar, enriquecidas la mayor parte en el comercio del escabeche; suelen tener detrás un huerto labrado sobre la misma montaña, cuyo ingreso está en el piso segundo. Hay, además, tres ó cuatro caserones solariegos, deshabitados, medio derruidos; se conoce que los hidalgos que los habitaban han huido hace tiempo de la sombría y monótona existencia de aquel pueblo singular. Cuando lo hayáis visitado, les daréis la razón.[1] Vivir en el fondo de aquel barranco oscuro donde los ruidos de la mar y del viento zumban como en un caracol, debe de ser bien triste.[2]

En Rodillero, no obstante, nadie se aburre; no hay tiempo para ello. La lucha ruda, incesante, que aquel puñado de seres necesita sostener con el océano para poder alimentarse, de tal modo absorbe su atención, que no se echa menos[3] ninguno de los goces que proporcionan las grandes ciudades. Los hombres salen á la mar por la mañana ó á media noche, según la estación, y regresan á la tarde: las mujeres se ocupan en llevar el pescado á las villas inmediatas, ó en freírlo para escabeche en las fábricas, en tejer y remendar las redes, coser las velas y en los demás quehaceres domésticos. Adviértese[4] entre los dos sexos extraordinarias diferencias en el carácter y en el ingenio. Los hombres son comúnmente graves, taciturnos, sufridos, de escaso entendimiento y noble corazón. En la escuela se observa que los niños son despiertos de espíritu y tienen la inteligencia lúcida; pero según avanzan en años, se va apagando ésta poco á poco, sin poder atribuirlo[5] á otra causa que á la vida exclusivamente material que observan, apenas[6] comienzan á ganarse el pan: desde la mar á la taberna, desde la taberna á casa,

desde casa otra vez á la mar, y así un día y otro día, hasta que se mueren ó inutilizan.[1] Hay, no obstante, en el fondo de su alma una chispa de espiritualismo que no se apaga jamás, porque la mantiene viva la religión. Los habitantes de Rodillero son profundamente religiosos; el peligro constante en que viven les mueve á poner el pensamiento y la esperanza en Dios. El pescador todos los días se despide para el mar, que es lo desconocido; todos los días se va á perder en ese infinito azul de agua y de aire sin saber si volverá. Y algunas veces, en efecto, no vuelve: no se pasan nunca muchos años sin que Rodillero pague su tributo de carne al océano: en ocasiones el tributo es terrible: en el invierno de 1852 perecieron 80 hombres que representaban una tercera parte de la población útil. Poco á poco esta existencia va labrando su espíritu,[2] despegándoles de los intereses materiales, haciéndoles generosos, serenos, y con la familia tiernos: no abundan entre los marinos los avaros, los intrigantes y tramposos, como entre los campesinos.

La mujer es muy distinta: tiene las cualidades de que carece su esposo, pero también los defectos. Es inteligente, de genio vivo y emprendedor, astuta y habilidosa,[3] por lo cual lleva casi siempre la dirección de la familia: en cambio suele ser codiciosa, deslenguada y pendenciera. Esto en cuanto á lo moral.[4] Por lo que toca á lo corporal, no hay más que[5] rendirse y confesar que no hay en Asturias y por ventura en España quien sostenga comparación con ellas. Altas, esbeltas, de carnes macizas y sonrosadas, cabellos negros abundosos, ojos negros también y rasgados,[6] que miran con severidad como los de las diosas griegas; la

nariz, recta ó levemente aguileña, unida á la frente por una línea delicada, termina con ventanas un poco dilatadas y de movilidad extraordinaria, indicando bien su natural impetuoso y apasionado; la boca fresca, de un rojo vivo que contrasta primorosamente con la blancura de los dientes; caminan con majestad, como las romanas; hablan velozmente y con acento musical, que las hace reconocer en seguida donde quiera que van; sonríen poco, y eso con cierto desdén olímpico. No creo que en ningún otro rincón de España se pueda presentar un ramillete de mujeres tan exquisito.

En este rincón, como en todos los demás de la tierra, se representan comedias y dramas, no tan complicados como en las ciudades, porque son más simples las costumbres, pero quizá no menos interesantes. Uno de ellos se me ofrece que contar: es la historia sencilla de un pobre marinero. Escuchadla los que amáis[1] la humilde verdad, que á vosotros la dedico.

I

ERAN las dos de la tarde. El sol resplandecía vivo, centelleante, sobre el mar. La brisa apenas tenía fuerza para hinchar las velas de las lanchas pescadoras que surcaban el océano á la ventura.[2] Los picos salientes de la costa y las montañas de tierra adentro[3] se veían á lo lejos envueltas en un finísimo cendal azulado. Los pueblecillos costaneros brillaban como puntos blancos en el fondo de las ensenadas. Reinaba silencio, el silencio solemne, infinito, de la mar en calma. La mayor parte de los pescadores dormían ó dormitaban en varias y caprichosas actitudes; quiénes

de bruces sobre el carel,[1] quiénes respaldados, quiénes[2] tendidos boca arriba sobre los *paneles* ó tablas del fondo. Todos conservaban en la mano derecha los hilos de los aparejos, que cortaban el agua por detrás de la lancha en líneas paralelas: la costumbre les hacía no soltarlos[3] ni en el sueño más profundo. Marchaban treinta ó cuarenta embarcaciones á la vista unas de otras, formando á modo de escuadrilla,[4] y resbalaban tan despacio por la tersa y luciente superficie del agua, que á ratos parecían inmóviles. La lona tocaba á menudo en los palos, produciendo un ruido sordo que convidaba al sueño. El calor era sofocante y pegajoso, como pocas veces acontece en el mar.

El patrón de una de las lanchas abandonó la caña del timón por un instante, sacó el pañuelo y se limpió el sudor de la frente; después volvió á empuñar la caña, y paseó una mirada escrutadora por el horizonte, fijándose[5] en una lancha que se había alejado bastante; presto volvió á su actitud descuidada, contemplando con ojos distraídos á sus dormidos compañeros. Era joven, rubio, de ojos azules; las facciones, aunque labradas y requemadas por la intemperie, no dejaban de ser[6] graciosas; la barba, cerrada y abundante; el traje, semejante al de todos los marineros, calzones y chaqueta de algodón azul y boína blanca; algo más fino, no obstante, y mejor arreglado.

Uno de los marineros levantó al cabo la frente del carel, y restregándose los ojos, articuló oscuramente y con mal humor:

— ¡ El diablo me lleve si no vamos á estar encalmados todo el día!

— No lo creas — repuso el patrón escrutando de

nuevo el horizonte, — antes de una hora ventará fresco del Oeste; el semblante viene de allá:[1] Tomás ya amuró[2] para ir al encuentro.

— ¿Dónde está Tomás? — preguntó el marinero, mirando al mar con la mano puesta sobre los ojos á guisa de pantalla.

— Ya no se le ve.

— ¿Pescó algo?

— No me parece . . . ; pero pescará . . . y todos pescaremos. Hoy no nos vamos sin bonito[3] á casa.

— Allá veremos[4] — gruñó el marinero echándose nuevamente de bruces para dormir.

El patrón tornó á ser[5] el único hombre despierto en la embarcación. Cansado de mirar el semblante, el mar y las lanchas, puso los ojos en un marinero viejo que dormía boca arriba debajo de los bancos, con tal expresión de ferocidad en el rostro, que daba miedo. Mas el patrón, en vez de mostrarlo, sonrió con placer.

— Oye, Bernardo — dijo tocando en el hombro al marinero con quien acababa de hablar; — mira qué cara tan fea pone el Corsario para dormir.[6]

El marinero levantó otra vez la cabeza y sonrió también con expresión de burla.

— Aguarda un poco, José, vamos á darle un chasco . . . Dame acá esa piedra . . .

El patrón, comprendiendo en seguida, tomó un gran pedrusco que servía de lastre en la popa y se lo llevó en silencio á su compañero. Éste fué sacando del agua con mucha pausa y cuidado el aparejo del Corsario, y cuando hubo topado con el anzuelo, le amarró con fuerza el pedrusco y lo dejó caer muy delicadamente

en el agua: y con toda presteza se echó de nuevo sobre el carel en actitud de dormir.

—¡Ay, María![1] —gritó despavorido el marinero al sentir la fuerte sacudida del aparejo: la prisa de levantarse le hizo dar un testerazo[2] contra el banco; pero no se quejó.

Los compañeros todos despertaron y se inclinaron de la banda de babor, por donde el Corsario comenzaba á tirar ufano[3] de su aparejo. Bernardo también levantó la cabeza, exclamando con mal humor:

—¡Ya pescó el Corsario! ¡Se necesita que no haya un pez en la mar para que este recondenado no lo aferre![4]

Al decir esto guiñó el ojo á un marinero, que á su vez dió un codazo á otro, y éste á otro; de suerte que en un instante casi todos se pusieron al tanto de[5] la broma.

—¿Es grande, Corsario?—dijo otra vez Bernardo.

—¿Grande?... Ven aquí á tener; verás cómo tira.

El marinero tomó la cuerda que el otro le tendía, y haciendo grandes muecas de asombro frente á[6] sus compañeros, exclamó en tono solemne:

—¡Así Dios me mate,[7] si no pesa treinta libras! Será el mejor animal de la costera.[8]

Mientras tanto[9] el Corsario, trémulo, sonriente, rebosando de orgullo, tiraba vigorosamente, pero con delicadeza, del aparejo, cuidando de arriar de vez en cuando[10] para que no se le escapara la presa. Los rostros de los pescadores se inclinaban sobre el agua, conteniendo á duras penas la risa.

—¿Pero qué imán ó qué mil diablos traerá consigo[11] este ladrón, que hasta dormido aferra los peces?—se-

guía exclamando Bernardo con muecas cada vez más[1] grotescas.

El Corsario notó que el bonito, contra su costumbre, tiraba siempre en dirección al fondo; pero no hizo caso,[2] y siguió[3] trayendo el aparejo, hasta que se vió claramente la piedra al través del agua.

¡Allí fué Troya![4] Los pescadores soltaron todos á la vez el hilo de la risa,[5] que[6] harto lo necesitaban, prorrumpieron en gritos de alegría, se apretaban los ijares con los puños y se retorcían sobre los bancos sin poder sosegar el flujo de las carcajadas.

—¡Adentro con él, Corsario, que ya está cerca!

—No es bonito, pero es un pez muy estimado por lo tierno y sabroso.

—Sobre todo con aceite y vinagre y un si es no es[7] de pimentón.

—Apostad á que no pesa treinta libras como yo decía.

El Corsario, mohino, fruncido y de malísimo talante, metió á bordo el pedrusco, lo desamarró y soltó de nuevo el aparejo al agua: después echó una terrible mirada á sus compañeros y murmuró:

—¡Cochinos, si os hubierais visto en los apuros que yo,[8] no tendríais gana de bromas!

Y se tendió de nuevo, gruñendo feos juramentos. La risa de los compañeros no se calmó por eso; prosiguió viva un buen rato, reanimada, cuando estaba á punto de fenecer, por algún chistoso comentario. Al fin se calmó, no obstante, ó más bien, se fué trasformando en alegre plática, y ésta á la postre en letargo y sueño.

Empezaba á refrescar la brisa; al ruido de la

lona en los palos sucedió el susurro del agua en la quilla.

El patrón, con la cabeza levantada, sin perder de vista las lanchas, aspiraba con delicia este viento precursor del pescado: echó una mirada á los aparejos para cerciorarse de que no iban enredados, orzó un poco para ganar el viento, atesó cuanto pudo la escota y se dejó ir. La embarcación respondió á estas maniobras ladeándose para tomar vuelo. Los ojos de lince del timonel observaron que una lancha acababa de aferrar.

— Ya estamos sobre el bonito — dijo en voz alta; pero nadie despertó.

Al cabo de un momento, el marinero más próximo á la proa gritó reciamente:

— ¡ Ay, María!

El patrón largó la escota para suspender la marcha. El marinero se detuvo antes de tirar, asaltado por el recuerdo de la broma anterior, y echando una mirada recelosa á sus compañeros, preguntó:

— ¿ Es una piedra también?

— ¡ Tira, animal! — gritó José temiendo que el pescado se fuese.

El bonito había arrastrado ya casi todo el aparejo. El marinero comenzó á tirar con fuerza. Á las pocas brazas de hilo que metió dentro,[1] lo arrió de nuevo, porque el pez lo mantenía harto vibrante, y no era difícil que lo quebrase; volvió á tirar y volvió á arriar; y de esta suerte, tirando y arriando, consiguió pronto que se distinguiese allá en el fondo un bulto oscuro que se revolvía furioso despidiendo destellos de plata: y cuanto más se le acercaba al haz del agua, mayores

eran y más rabiosos sus esfuerzos por dar la vuelta[1] y escapar; y unas veces, cuando el pescador arriaba el cabo, parecía conseguirlo, remedando en cierto modo al hombre que, huyendo, se juzga libre de su fatal destino; y otras, rendido y exánime, se dejaba arrastrar dócilmente hacia la muerte. Al sacarlo de su nativo elemento y meterlo á bordo, con sus saltos y cabriolas salpicó de agua á toda la tripulación. Después, cuando le arrancaron el anzuelo de la boca, quedó inmóvil un instante, como si hiciese la mortecina;[2] mas de pronto[3] comenzó á sacudirse debajo de los bancos con tanto estrépito y furor, que en poco estuvo no saltase otra vez al agua.[4] Pero ya nadie hacía caso de él; otros dos bonitos se habían aferrado casi al mismo tiempo, y los pescadores se ocupaban en meterlos dentro.

La pesca fué abundante. En obra de[5] tres ó cuatro horas, entraron á bordo ciento y dos bonitos.

—¿Cuántos?—preguntaron desde una lancha que pasaba cerca.

—Ciento dos. ¿Y vosotros?

—Sesenta.

—¡No os lo dije yo!—exclamó Bernardo dirigiéndose á sus compañeros.—Ya veréis como no llega á ochenta la que más lleve á casa. Cuando un hombre se quiere casar, aguza las uñas que asombra[6]...

Todos los rostros se entornaron sonrientes hacia el patrón, en cuyos labios también se dibujó una sonrisa, que hizo más bondadosa aún la expresión de su rostro.

—¿Cuándo te casas, José?—preguntó uno de los marineros.

—Tomás y Manuel ya amuraron para tierra—dijo

él sin contestar. — Suelta esa driza, Ramón; vamos á cambiar.[1]

Después que se hubo efectuado la maniobra, dijo Bernardo:

— ¿Preguntabais cuándo se casa José?... Pues bien claro está... En cuanto[2] se bote al agua la lancha.

— ¿Cuándo le dan brea?

— Muy pronto: el calafate me dijo que antes de quince días quedaría[3] lista — repuso Bernardo.

— Habrá tocino y jamón aquel día; ¿eh, José?

— Y vino de Rueda superior — dijo otro.

— Y cigarros de la Habana — apuntó un tercero.

— Yo se lo perdonaba[4] todo — dijo Bernardo — con tal que el día de la boda nos llevase á ver la comedia á Sarrió.

— Es imposible; ¿no reparas que aquella noche José no puede acostarse tarde?

— Bien; pues entonces que nos dé los cuartos[5] para ir, y que él se quede en casa.

El patrón lo escuchaba todo sin decir palabra, con la misma sonrisa benévola en los labios.

— ¡Qué mejor comedia — exclamó uno — que casarse con la hija de la maestra![6]

— ¡Bah, bah! ten cuidado con lo que hablas — dijo José entre risueño y enfadado.[7]

Los compañeros celebraron la grosería como el chiste más delicado, y siguió la broma y cantaleta, mientras el viento, que comenzaba á sosegarse, los empujaba suavemente hacia tierra.

II

Comenzaba el crepúsculo cuando las barcas entraron en la ensenada de Rodillero. Una muchedumbre formada casi toda de mujeres y niños, aguardaba en la ribera, gritando, riendo, disputando; los viejos se mantenían algo más lejos sentados tranquilamente sobre el carel de alguna lancha que dormía sobre el guijo esperando la carena, mientras la gente principal ó de media levita[1] contemplaba la entrada de los barcos desde los bancos de piedra que tenían delante las casas más vecinas á la playa. Antes de llegar, con mucho,[2] ya sabía la gente de la ribera, por la experiencia de toda la vida, que traían bonito. Y como sucedía siempre en tales casos, esta noticia se reflejaba en los semblantes en forma de sonrisa. Las mujeres preparaban los cestos á recibir la pesca, y se remangaban los brazos con cierta satisfacción voluptuosa; los chicos escalaban los peñascos más próximos á fin de averiguar prontamente lo que guardaba el fondo de las lanchas. Éstas se acercaban lentamente: los pescadores, graves, silenciosos, dejaban caer perezosamente los remos sobre el agua.

Una tras otra fueron embarrancando[3] en el guijo de la ribera; los marineros se salían[4] de ellas dando un gran salto para no mojarse; algunos se quedaban á bordo para descargar el pescado, que iban arrojando pieza tras pieza[5] á la playa. Recogíanlas las mujeres, y con increíble presteza las despojaban de la cabeza y la tripa, las amontonaban después en los cestos, y

remangándose las enaguas, se entraban algunos pasos por el agua á lavarlas. En poco tiempo, una buena parte de ésta, y el suelo de la ribera, quedaron teñidos de sangre.

En cuanto saltaron á tierra, los patrones formaron un grupo y señalaron el precio del pescado. Los dueños de las bodegas de escabeche y las mujerucas[1] que comerciaban con lo fresco[2] esperaban recelosas á cierta distancia el resultado de la plática.

Una mujer vestida con más decencia que las otras, vieja, de rostro enjuto, nariz afilada y ojos negros y hundidos, se acercó á José cuando éste se apartó del grupo, y le preguntó con ansiedad:

— ¿Á cómo?

— Á real y medio.

— ¡Á real y medio! — exclamó con acento colérico. — ¿Y cuándo pensáis bajarlo?[3] ¿Pensáis que lo vamos á pagar lo mismo cuando haya mucho que cuando haya poco?

— Á mí no me cuente nada,[4] señá[5] Isabel — repuso avergonzado José. — Yo no he dicho esta boca es mía.[6] Allá ellos lo arreglaron.[7]

— Pero tú has debido advertirles[8] — replicó la vieja con el mismo tono irritado — que no es justo; que nos estamos arruinando miserablemente; y en fin, que no podemos seguir así...

— Vamos, no se enfade, señora... yo haré lo que pueda por que mañana se baje. Además, ya sabe...

— ¿Qué?

— Que los dos quiñones de la lancha y el mío los puede pagar como quiera.

— No te lo he dicho por eso — manifestó la señá

Isabel endulzándose repentinamente; — pero tú bien te haces cargo[1] de que perdemos el dinero; que el maragato siguiendo así nos devolverá los barriles[2]... Mira, allí tienes á Elisa pesando; ve allá, que más gana tendrás de dar la lengua[3] con ella que conmigo.

José sonrió, y diciendo adios, se alejó unos cuantos pasos.

— Oyes, José — le gritó la señá Isabel enviándole una sonrisa zalamera. — ¿Conque al fin, á cómo me dejas eso?

— Á como V. quiera: ya se lo he dicho.

— No, no; tú lo has de decidir.

— ¿Le parece mucho á diez cuartos?[4] — preguntó tímidamente.

— Bastante — respondió la vieja sin dejar la sonrisa aduladora. — Vamos, para no andar en más cuestiones,[5] será á real, ¿te parece?

José se encogió de hombros[6] en señal de resignarse, y encaminó los pasos hacia una de las varias bodegas que, con el pomposo nombre de fábricas, rodeaban la playa. Á la puerta estaba una hermosa joven, alta, fresca, sonrosada, como la mayor parte de sus convecinas, aunque de facciones más finas y concertadas que el común de ellas. Vestía asimismo de modo semejante, pero con más aliño y cuidado; el pañuelo, atado á la espalda, no era de percal,[7] sino de lana; los zapatos de becerro fino, las medias blancas y pulidas; tenía los brazos desnudos, y, cierto, eran de lo más primoroso y acabado en su orden. Estaba embebecida[8] y atenta á la operación de pesar el bonito que en su presencia ejecutaban tres ó cuatro mujeres ayudadas de un mari-

nero: á veces ella misma tomaba parte sosteniendo el pescado entre las manos.

Cuando sintió los pasos de José, levantó la cabeza, y sus grandes ojos rasgados y negros sonrieron con dulzura.

— Hola José; ¿ya has despachado?

— Nos falta[1] arrastrar los barcos. ¿Trajeron todo el pescado?

— Sí, aquí está ya. Dime — continuó, acercándose á José, — ¿á cómo lo habéis puesto?

— Á real y medio; pero á tu madre se lo he puesto á real.

El rostro de Elisa se enrojeció súbitamente.

— ¿Te lo ha pedido ella?

— No.

— Sí, sí; no me lo niegues; la conozco bien . . .

— Vaya, no te pongas seria[2] . . . Se lo he ofrecido yo á ese precio, porque comprendo que no puede ganar de otro modo . . .

— Sí gana, José, sí gana — dijo con acento triste la joven. — Lo que hay es que quiere ganar más . . . El dinero es todo para ella.

— Bah, no me arruinaré por eso.

— ¡Pobre José! — exclamó ella después de una pausa, poniéndole cariñosamente una mano sobre el hombro; — ¡qué bueno eres! . . . Por fortuna, pronto se concluirán estas miserias que me avergüenzan. ¿Cuando piensas botar la lancha?

— Veremos si puede ser el día de San Juan.[3]

— Entonces, ¿por qué no hablas ya con mi madre? El plazo que ha señalado ha sido ése: bueno fuera írselo recordando.

—¿Te parece que debo hacerlo?

—Claro está;[1] el tiempo se pasa, y ella no se da por entendida.[2]

—Pues la hablaré en seguida; así que[3] arrastremos la lancha...si es que me atrevo—añadió un poco confuso.

El que no se atreve, José, no pasa la mar[4]—contestó la joven sonriendo.

—¿Hablaré á tu padrastro también?

—Lo mismo da;[5] de todos modos, ha de ser lo que ella quiera.

—Hasta luego,[6] entonces.

—Hasta luego; procura abreviar, para que no nos cojas cenando.

José se encaminó de nuevo á la ribera, donde ya los marineros comenzaban á poner la lancha en seco, con no poca pena y esfuerzo. El crepúsculo terminaba, y daba comienzo la noche. Las mujeres y los chicos ayudaban á sus maridos y padres en aquella fatigosa tarea de todos los días. Oíanse los gritos sostenidos de los que empujaban, para hacer simultáneo el esfuerzo; y entre las sombras, que comenzaban á espesarse, veíanse sus siluetas formando apretado grupo en torno de las embarcaciones: éstas subían con marcha interrumpida por la playa arriba[7] haciendo crugir el guijo. Cuando las alejaron bastante del agua para tenerlas á salvo, fueron recogiendo los enseres de la pesca que habían dejado esparcidos por la ribera, y echando una última mirada al mar, inmóvil y oscuro, dejaron aquel sitio y se entraron poco á poco en el lugar.

José también enderezó los pasos hacia él cuando hubo dado las órdenes necesarias para el día siguiente.

Siguió rápidamente la única calle, bastante clara á la sazón[1] por el gran número de tabernas que estaban abiertas: de todas salía formidable rumor de voces y juramentos. Y sin hacer caso de los amigos que le llamaban á gritos invitándole á beber, llegó hasta muy cerca de la salida del pueblo y entró en una tienda cuya claridad rompía alegremente la oscuridad de la calle. En aquella tendezuela[2] angosta y baja de techo como la cámara de un barco, se vendía de todo; bacalao,[3] sombreros, cerillas, tocino, catecismos y coplas. Ocupaban lugar preferente, no obstante, los instrumentos de pesca y demás enseres marítimos; tres ó cuatro rollos grandes de cable yacían en el suelo sirviendo de taburetes; sartas de anzuelos colgaban de un remo atravesado de una pared á otra; y algunos botes[4] de alquitrán á medio consumir,[5] esparcían por la estancia un olor penetrante que mareaba á quien no estuviese avezado á sufrirlo. Pero la nariz de los tertulianos asiduos de la tienda no se daba por ofendida;[6] quizá no advertía siquiera la presencia de tales pebeteros.

Sentada detrás de la tabla de pino que servía de mostrador, estaba la señá Isabel. Su esposo, D. Claudio, maestro de primeras letras[7] (y últimas también, porque no había otras) de Rodillero, se mantenía en pie á un lado cortando gravemente en pedazos una barra de jabón: la luenga levita que usaba, adornada á la sazón por un par de manguitos de percalina[8] sujetos[9] con cintas al brazo, y la rara erudición y florido lenguaje de que á menudo hacía gala,[10] no eran parte[11] á desviarle de esta ocupación grosera; diez años hacía que estaba casado con la viuda del difunto Vega, ten-

dero y fabricante de escabeche, y en todo este tiempo había sabido compartir noblemente, y sin daño, las altas tareas del magisterio con las menos gloriosas del comercio, prestando igual atención, como él solía decir, á Minerva y á Mercurio. Tenía cincuenta años, poco más ó menos,[1] el color tirando á amarillo, la nariz abierta, el cabello escaso, los ojos salidos, con expresión inmutable de susto ó sorpresa, cual si estuviese continuamente en presencia de alguna escena trágica visible sólo para él. Era de condición apacible y benigna, ménos en la escuela, donde atormentaba á los chicos sin piedad, no por inclinación de su temperamento, sino por virtud de doctrinas arraigadas en el ánimo profundamente. Las disciplinas, la palmeta, los estirones de orejas y los coscorrones formaban para D. Claudio parte integral del sistema de la ciencia, lo mismo que las letras y los números; todo ello estaba comprendido bajo el nombre genérico de *castigo*. D. Claudio pronunciaba siempre esta palabra con veneración; elevándose de golpe á las cimas de la metafísica, pensaba que el castigo no era un mal, sino uno de los dones más deleitables y sabrosos[2] que el hombre debía á la providencia de Dios. En este supuesto, el que castigaba debía ser considerado como ángel tutelar, á semejanza del que restaña una herida. Procuraba rodear los castigos de aparato, á fin de obtener corrección y ejemplaridad; nunca los infligía con ímpetu y apresuradamente; primero se enteraba bien de la falta cometida, y después de pesarla en la balanza de la justicia, sentenciaba al reo y apuntaba la condena en un papel; el penado iba á juntarse en un rincón de la escuela con otros galeotes, y allí esperaba con salu-

dables espasmos de terror la hora fatal. Al terminarse las lecciones, recorría D. Claudio el boletín de castigos, y en vista de él, comenzaba, por orden de antigüedad, á ejecutar los suplicios en presencia de toda la escuela. Una vez que daba remate[1] á esta tarea, solía aplicar algunas palmaditas paternales en los rostros llorosos de los chicos vapuleados, diciéndoles cariñosamente:

— Vaya, hijos míos, á casa ahora, á casa; algún día me agradeceréis estos azotes que os he dado.

En el lugar era bien quisto y se le recibía en todas partes con la benevolencia no exenta de desdén con que se mira siempre en este mundo á los seres inofensivos. Los vecinos todos sabían que D. Claudio vivía en casa aherrojado, que su mujer « le tenía en un puño[2] : » no sólo porque su condición humilde y apocada se prestase[3] á ello, sino también porque en la sociedad conyugal él era el pobre y su mujer la rica. La riqueza de la señá Isabel, no obstante, era sólo temporal, porque procedía del difunto Vega; toda[4] debía recaer á su tiempo en Elisa; mas como ella la manejaba y la había de manejar aún por mucho tiempo, pues Elisa sólo contaba doce años á la muerte de su padre, D. Claudio pensó hacer una buena boda casándose con la viuda: tal era por lo menos la opinión unánime del pueblo. Por eso no se compadecían como debieran sus sinsabores domésticos; antes solían decir las comadres del lugar en tono sarcástico: — ¿ No quería mujer rica? .. Pues ya la tiene.

III

— Buena marea[1] hoy ¿eh José?

— Á última hora.[2] Bien pensé no traer veinte libras á casa.

— ¿Cuántas pesó el pescado?

— No lo sé . . . allá la señá Isabel.[3]

Ésta, que debía de saberlo perfectamente, levantó, sin embargo, la vista hacia Elisa, y preguntó:

— ¿Cuántas, Elisa?

— Mil ciento cuarenta.

— Pues estando á real y medio, tú debes de levantar hoy muy cerca de veinte duros — dijo el primer interlocutor, que era el juez de paz de Rodillero en persona.

Elisa, al oír estas palabras, se encendió de rubor otra vez. José bajó la cabeza algo confuso y dijo entre dientes:[4]

— No tanto, no tanto.

La señá Isabel siguió impasible cosiendo.

— ¿Cómo no tanto? — saltó[5] D. Claudio recalcando[6] fuertemente las sílabas, según tenía por costumbre. — Me parece que aun se ha quedado corto el señor juez. Nada más fácil que justipreciar exactamente lo que te corresponde; es una operación sencillísima de aritmética elemental. Espera un poco — añadió dirigiéndose á un estante y sacando papel y pluma de ave.

La señá Isabel le clavó una mirada fría y aguda que le hubiera anonadado á no encontrarse[7] en aquel instante de espaldas.[8] Sacó del bolsillo un tintero de asta y lo destornilló con trabajo.

— Vamos á ver. Problema. Mil ciento cuarenta

libras de bonito á real y medio la libra, ¿cuántos reales serán? Debemos multiplicar mil ciento cuarenta por uno y medio. Es la multiplicación de un entero por un mixto. Necesitamos reducir el mixto á quebrado ... uno por dos es dos. Tenemos dos medios más un medio. Tienen el denominador común: sumemos los numeradores. Dos y uno tres; tres medios. Multipliquemos ahora el entero por el quebrado: tres por cero es cero; tres por cuatro doce, llevo uno ...

—¿Quieres dejarnos en paz, querido?—interrumpió la señá Isabel, conteniendo á duras penas la cólera. —Estamos cansados de que lleves y traigas tantos quebrados y tantos mixtos para nada.

—Mujer ... ¿quieres que yo cuente por los dedos? ... La ciencia ...

—¡Bah, bah, bah! ... aquí no estás en la escuela: hazme el favor de callar.

D. Claudio hizo una mueca de resignación, volvió á atornillar el tintero, lo sepultó en el fondo de la levita y se puso de nuevo á partir jabón.

Después de una pausa, el juez municipal mitigó el desaire de D. Claudio haciendo una apología acabada de la aritmética; para él no había más ciencias que las exactas. Pero D. Claudio, aunque agradecido al socorro, se mostró contrario á las afirmaciones de la autoridad, y se entabló disputa acerca del orden y dignidad de las ciencias.

El juez municipal de Rodillero era un capitán de Infantería, retirado hacía ya bastantes años: vivía ó vegetaba en su pueblo natal con los escasos emolumentos que el Gobierno le pagaba tarde y de mal modo: una hermana, más vieja que él, cuidaba de su casa y

hacienda: era hombre taciturno, caviloso y en grado sumo susceptible; gozaba fama de pundonoroso y justificado:[1] se le achacaban como defectos la sobrada rigidez de carácter y el apego invencible á las propias opiniones.

Á su lado estaba un caballero anciano, de nobles y correctas facciones, con grandes bigotes blancos y perilla prolongada hasta el medio del pecho; el cabello largo también y desgreñado, los ojos negros y ardientes, la mirada altiva y la sonrisa desdeñosa: su figura exigua y torcida no era digno pedestal para aquella hermosa cabeza; además, la levita sucia y raída que gastaba, los pantalones de paño burdo y los zapatos claveteados de labrador, contribuían mucho á menoscabar su prestigio. Llamábase D. Fernando de Meira, y pertenecía á una antigua y noble familia de Rodillero, totalmente arruinada hacía ya muchos años. Los hijos de esta familia se habían desparramado por el mundo en busca del necesario sustento: el único que permanecía pegado al viejo caserón solariego como una ostra era D. Fernando, al cual su carrera de abogado no le había servido jamás para ganarse la vida, ó por falta de aptitudes para ejercerla, ó por el profundo desprecio que al noble vástago de la casa de Meira le inspiraba toda ocupación que no fuese la caza ó la pesca. Vivía en una de las habitaciones menos derruidas de su casa, la cual se estaba viniendo abajo por diferentes sitios no hacía ya poco tiempo: servíanle de compañeros en ella los ratones que escaramuzaban y batallaban libremente por todo su ámbito, las tímidas lagartijas que anidaban en las grietas de las paredes, y una muchedumbre de murciélagos que volteaba por

las noches con medroso rumor. Nadie le conocía[1] renta ó propiedad de donde se sustentase, y pasaba como artículo de fe en el pueblo que el anciano caballero veía el hambre de cerca en bastantes ocasiones.

Cuando más joven, salía de caza y acostumbraba á traer provisión abundante, pues era el más diestro cazador de la comarca; al faltarle las fuerzas, consagróse enteramente á la pesca; los días en que la mar estaba bella salía el Sr. de Meira en su bote al calamar, al chicharro, á la robaliza ó á los muiles,[2] según la estación y las circunstancias del agua: en este arte dió señales de ser tan avisado como en la caza; del pescado que le sobraba solía regalar á los particulares de Rodillero, porque D. Fernando se hubiera dejado morir de hambre antes que vender un solo pez cogido por su mano; pero estos regalos engendraban en justa correspondencia otros, y merced á ellos, el caballero podía atender á las más apremiantes necesidades de su cocina, la leña, el aceite, los huevos, etc., y aún autorizarse en ocasiones algún exceso: él mismo se aderezaba los manjares que comía y no con poca inteligencia, al decir de las gentes; se hablaba con mucho encomio de una caldereta[3] singular que el Sr. de Meira guisaba como ningún cocinero. Pero llegó un día en que el pueblo supo con sorpresa que el caballero había vendido su bote á un comerciante de Sarrió: la razón todos la adivinaron, por más que[4] él la ocultó diciendo que lo había enajenado para comprar otro mejor. Desde entonces, en vez de salir al mar, pescaba desde la orilla con la caña, ó lo que es igual, en vez de ir al encuentro de los peces los esperaba pacientemente sentado sobre alguna peña solitaria. Cuando no venían, observaban los ve-

cinos que no salía humo por la chimenea de la casa de Meira.

—¿Madre, no arregla[1] la cuenta á José?...es ya hora de cenar—dijo Elisa á la señá Isabel.

—¿Tienes despierto el apetito?—contestó ésta, dibujándose en sus labios una sonrisa falsa.—Pues aguárdate, hija mía, que necesito concluir lo que tengo entre manos.

Desde que José había entrado en la tienda, Elisa no había dejado de hacerle señas con disimulo, animándole á llamar aparte á su madre y decirle lo que tenían convenido. El marinero se mostraba tímido, vacilante, y manifestaba á su novia, también por señas, que aguardaba á que los tertulianos se fuesen. Ella replicaba que éstos no se irían sino cuando llegase el momento de cenar. José no acababa de decidirse. Finalmente, la joven cansada de la indecisión de su novio, se arrojó[2] á proponer á su madre lo que acabamos de oír, con el fin de que pasase á la trastienda y allí se entablase la conversación que apetecía. La respuesta de la señá Isabel los dejó tristes y pensativos.

Habían entrado en la tienda, después de nuestro José, otros tres ó cuatro marineros, entre ellos Bernardo. La conversación rodaba, como casi siempre, sobre intereses; quién tenía más, quién tenía menos. Se habló de un potentado de la provincia, que acababa de adquirir en aquella comarca algunas tierras.

—¿Es muy rico ese señor conde?—preguntó un marinero.

D. Fernando extendió la mano solemnemente y dijo:

—Mi primo el conde de la Mata tiene cuatro mil fanegas de renta[3] por su madre en Piloña. De su

padre le habrá quedado poco: el mayorazgo de los Velascos nunca fué muy grande, y lo ha mermado mucho mi tío.

—Las doscientas fanegas que ha comprado en Riofontán—dijo el juez—son lo mejor del concejo:[1] en veintidós mil duros han sido baratas.

—D. Anacleto estaba necesitado de fondos; su hijo le ha gastado un capital en Madrid, según dicen—apuntó D. Claudio.

—También á él le salieron baratas[2] cuando las compró hace años—manifestó uno de los marineros.

—¿Á quién se las compró—preguntó otro.

D. Fernando extendió de nuevo la mano con igual majestad, diciendo:

—Á mi primo el marqués de las Quintanas... Pero éste no tenía necesidad de dinero: las vendió para trasladar sus rentas á Andalucía.[3]

—¿También ese señor es su primo?—dijo Bernardo levantando la cabeza y haciendo una mueca cómica que hizo sonreír á los presentes.

D. Fernando le dirigió una mirada iracunda.

—Sí señor, es mi primo... ¿y qué hay con eso?[4]...

—Nada, nada—manifestó Bernardo con sorna,[5]—que[6] me pareció demasiada primacía.[7]

—Pues has de saber—exclamó D. Fernando con exaltación,—que mi casa es dos siglos más antigua que la suya. Cuando los Quintanas eran unos petates, unos hidalgüelos de mala muerte[8] en Andalucía, ya los señores de Meira levantaban pendón[9] en Asturias y tenían fundada su colegiata y armada la horca[10] en los terrenos que hoy son de Pepe Llanos. Un Quintanas vino de allá á pedir la mano de una dama de la casa de

Meira, teniéndolo á mucho honor[1] ... En mi casa había entonces dotes cuantiosas para todas las hembras que se casaban ... De mi casa salieron dotes para la casa de Miranda, para la de Peñalta, para la de Santa Cruz, para la de Guzmán ...

— Vamos — dijo Bernardo sonriendo, — por eso se quedó V. tan pobre.

Los ojos de D. Fernando centellaron de ira al escuchar estas malignas palabras.

— Oyes tú, cochino, zambombo, ¿te he pedido algo á ti? ¿Qué tienes que partir en[2] mi riqueza ni[3] en mi pobreza? Has de saber que tú y yo no hemos mamado la misma leche, grandísimo pendejo[4] ...

— D. Fernando, sosiéguese V. — dijo D. Claudio. — La cólera es mala consejera.

— No le haga V. caso, D. Fernando — manifestó la señá Isabel.

— Paz, paz, paz, señores — exclamó el juez municipal levantando las manos con autoridad.

Bernardo reía cazurramente, sin dársele nada, al parecer, de[5] las injurias que le vomitaba el Sr. de Meira. Estas escenas eran frecuentes entre ambos: el festivo marinero gustaba de mortificarle y verle encolerizado: después, se arrepentía de lo dicho, hacían las paces, y hasta otra.[6] El anciano caballero no podía guardar rencor á nadie; sus cóleras eran como la espuma del vino.

— Madre, ya es hora de cenar — dijo Elisa aprovechando el silencio que siguió á la reyerta. — José tendrá ganas de irse.[7]

La señá Isabel no contestó; su ojo avizor[8] había descubierto, hacía ya rato largo, que D. Fernando trataba

de hablar reservadamente con su esposo. En el momento en que Elisa volvía á su tema, observó que el Sr. de Meira tiraba disimuladamente de la levita á D. Claudio, marchándose después hacia la puerta como en ademán de investigar el tiempo: el maestro le siguió.

— Claudio — dijo la señá Isabel antes de que pudiesen entablar conversación; — alcánzame el paquete de los botones de nácar que está empezado.

D. Claudio volvió sobre sus pasos; arrimóse á la estantería,[1] y empinándose cuanto pudo, sacó los botones del último estante. En el instante de entregarlos, su esposa le dijo por lo bajo con acento perentorio:

— Sube.

El maestro abrió más sus grandes ojos saltones,[2] sin comprender.

— Que te vayas de aquí — dijo su esposa tirándole de una manga con fuerza.

D. Claudio se apresuró á obedecer sin pedir explicaciones; salió por la puerta que daba al portal, y subió las escaleras de la casa.

— El señor de la casa de Meira necesita cuartos — dijo Bernardo al oído del marinero que tenía cerca. — ¿No has visto qué pronto lo ha olido[3] la señá Isabel? ¡Si se descuida en echar fuera al maestro![4] . . .

El marinero sonrió mirando al caballero, que seguía á la puerta en espera de[5] D. Claudio.

— Señores, ¿gustan VV. de cenar?[6] — dijo la señá Isabel levantándose de la silla.

Los tertulianos se levantaron también.

— José, tú subirás con nosotros, ¿verdad?

— Como V. quiera. Si mañana le viene[1] mejor arreglar eso . . .

— Bien; si á ti te parece . . .

Elisa no pudo contener un gesto de disgusto, y dijo precipitadamente:

— Madre, mañana es mal día; ya lo sabe . . . tenemos que cerrar una porción de barriles . . . y luego la misa, que siempre enreda algo[2] . . .

— No te apures tanto, mujer[3] . . . no te apures . . . lo arreglaremos hoy todo — contestó la señá Isabel clavando en su hija una mirada fría y escrutadora que la hizo turbarse.

Los tertulianos se fueron, dando las buenas noches.[4] La señá Isabel, después de atrancar la puerta, recogió el velón y subió la escalera, seguida de Elisa y José.

La salita donde entraron era pequeña, al tenor de[5] la tienda; gracias á los cuidados de Elisa, ofrecía grata disposición y apariencia; los muebles viejos, pero relucientes; un espejillo de marco dorado cubierto con gasa blanca para preservarlo de las moscas; sobre la mesa dos grandes caracoles de mar, y en medio de ellos un barquichuelo de cristal toscamente labrado. Estos atributos marinos suelen adornar las salas de las casas decentes de Rodillero. Colgaban de las paredes algunas malas estampas con marco negro, representando la conquista de Méjico, dando la preferencia á las escenas entre Hernán-Cortés y Doña Marina;[6] por bajo del espejo había algunas fotografías, con marco también, en que figuraba la señá Isabel y el difunto Vega poco después de haberse unido en lazo matrimonial; media docena de sillas y un sofá con funda de hilo,[7] completaban el mobiliario.

Cuando entraron en la sala, D. Claudio, que estaba asomado al corredor, se salió dejándoles el recinto libre. La señá Isabel pasó á la alcoba en busca del cuaderno sucio y descosido donde llevaba las cuentas todas[1] de su comercio; Elisa aprovechó aquel momento para decir rápidamente á su novio:

— No dejes de hablarle.[2]

Hizo un signo afirmativo José, aunque dando á entender el miedo y la turbación que le producía aquel paso. La joven se salió también cuando su madre tornó á la sala.

— El domingo, trescientas siete libras — dijo la señá Isabel, colocando el velón sobre la mesa y abriendo el cuaderno, — á real y cuartillo. El lunes, mil cuarenta, á real; el martes, dos mil doscientas, á medio real; el miércoles no habéis salido; el jueves, doscientas treinta y cinco, á dos reales; el viernes nada; hoy, mil ciento cuarenta, á real y medio... ¿No es esto,[3] José?

— Allá V., señora; yo no llevo apunte.[4]

— Voy á echar la cuenta.[5]

La vieja comenzó á multiplicar; no se oía en la sala más que el crugido de la pluma. José esperaba el resultado de la operación dando vueltas á[6] la boina que tenía en la mano. No el interés ó el afán de saber cuánto dinero iba á recibir ocupaba en aquel instante su ánimo; todo él estaba[7] embargado y perplejo, ante la idea de tratar el negocio de su matrimonio; buscaba con anhelo manera hábil de entrar en materia, concluida que fuese la cuenta.[8]

— Son[9] cuatro mil setecientos tres reales y tres cuartillos — dijo la señá Isabel, levantando la cabeza.

José calló en señal de asentimiento. Hubo una pausa.

— Hay que quitar de esto — manifestó la vieja bajando la voz y dulcificándola un poco — la rebaja que me has hecho en tu quiñón y en los de la lancha ... El domingo me lo has puesto á real; el lunes á tres cuartillos; el martes no hubo rebaja por estar barato; el jueves, á real y medio, y hoy á real. ¿No es eso?

— Sí, señora.

— La cuenta es mala de echar ... ¿Quieres que lo pongamos á siete cuartos,[1] para evitar equivocaciones? ... Me parece que pierdo en ello ...

José consintió, sin pararse á pensar si ganaba ó perdía. La vieja comenzó de nuevo á trazar números en el papel, y José á escogitar los medios de salir de aquel mal paso.

Terminó al fin la señá Isabel; aprobó José su propio despojo y recibió de mano de aquélla un puñado de oro, para repartir al día siguiente entre sus compañeros. Después que lo hubo encerrado en un bolsillo de cuero y colocado entre los pliegues de la faja, se puso otra vez á dar vueltas á la boina con las manos temblorosas. Había llegado el instante crítico de hablar. José nunca había sido un orador elocuente, pero en aquella sazón se sintió desposeído como nunca de las cualidades que lo constituyen. Un flujo de sangre le subió á la garganta y se la atascó; apenas acertaba á contestar con monosílabos á las preguntas que la señá Isabel le dirigía acerca de los sucesos de la pesca y de las esperanzas que cifraba para lo sucesivo; la vieja, después de haberle chupado la sangre,[2] se esforzaba en mostrarse amable con él. Mas la conversación, á pe-

sar de esto, fenecía, sin que el marinero lograse dar forma verbal á lo que pensaba. Y ya la señá Isabel se disponía á darla por terminada,[1] levantándose de la silla, cuando Elisa abrió repentinamente la puerta y entró, con pretexto de recoger unas tijeras que le hacían falta; al salir, y á espaldas de su madre,[2] le hizo un sin número[3] de señas y muecas, encaminadas todas á exigirle el cumplimiento de su promesa; fueron tan imperativas y terminantes, que el pobre marinero, sacando fuerzas de flaqueza y haciendo un esfuerzo supremo, se atrevió á decir:

— Señá Isabel...

El ruido de su voz le asustó, y sorprendió también por lo extraño á la vieja.

— ¿Qué decías, querido?

La mirada que acompañó á esta pregunta le hizo bajar la cabeza; estuvo algunos instantes suspenso y acongojado: al cabo sin levantar la vista y con la voz enronquecida dijo:

— Señá Isabel, el día de San Juan pienso botar la lancha al agua...

Contra lo que esperaba, la vieja no le atajó con ninguna palabra; siguió mirándole fijamente.

— No sé si recordará lo que en el invierno me ha dicho...

La señá Isabel permaneció muda.

— Yo no quisiera incomodarla... pero como el tiempo se va pasando, y ya no hay mayormente[4] ningún estorbo... y después la gente le pregunta á uno para cuándo... y tengo la casa apalabrada... lo mejor sería despachar el negocio antes de que el invierno se eche encima...

Nada; la maestra no chistaba.[1] José se iba turbando cada vez más: miraba al suelo con empeño, deseando quizá que se abriese.

La vieja se dignó al fin exclamar alegremente:

—¡Vaya un susto que me has dado,[2] querido! Pensé al verte tan azorado que ibas á soltarme una mala noticia y resulta que me hablas de lo que más gusto me puede dar.

El semblante del marinero se iluminó repentinamente.

—¡Qué alegría, señora! Tenía miedo...

—¿Por qué? ¿No sabes que yo lo deseo con tanto afán como tú?... José, tú eres un buen muchacho, trabajador, listo, nada[3] vicioso. ¿Qué más puedo desear para mi hija? Desde que empezaste á cortejarla te he mirado con buenos ojos, porque estoy segura de que la harás feliz. Hasta ahora hice cuanto estaba en mi mano[4] por vosotros, y Dios mediante, pienso seguir haciéndolo. En todo el día no os quito del pensamiento; no hago otra cosa que dar vueltas[5] para ver de qué modo arreglamos pronto ese dichoso casorio... Pero los jóvenes sois muy impacientes y echáis á perder[6] las cosas con vuestra precipitación... ¿Por qué tanta prisa? Lo mismo tú que Elisa[7] sois bastante jóvenes, y aunque, gracias á Dios, tengáis lo bastante para vivir, mañana ú otro día[8] si os vienen muchos hijos acaso no podáis decir lo mismo... Tened un poco de paciencia: trabaja tú cuanto puedas para que nunca haya miedo al hambre, y lo demás ya vendrá...

El semblante de José se oscureció de nuevo.

—Mientras tanto—prosiguió la vieja,—pierde

cuidado en lo que toca á Elisa: yo velaré porque su cariño no disminuya y sea siempre tan buena y hacendosa como hasta aquí... Vamos, no te pongas triste; no hay tiempo más alegre que el que se pasa de novio. Bota pronto la lancha al agua para aprovechar la costera del bonito. Cuando concluya, si ha sido buena, ya hablaremos.

Al decir esto se levantó: José hizo lo mismo sin apartar los ojos del suelo; tan triste y abatido, que inspiraba lástima. La señá Isabel le dió algunas palmaditas cariñosas en el hombro, empujándole al mismo tiempo hacia la puerta.

— Ea, vamos á cenar, querido, que tú ya tendrás gana y nosotros también. Elisa — añadió alzando la voz, — alumbra á José, que se va. Vaya, buenas noches, hasta mañana...

— Que V. descanse, señora — contestó José con voz apagada.

Elisa bajó con él la escalera, y le abrió la puerta. Ambos se miraron tristemente.

— Tu madre no quiere — dijo él.

— Lo he oído todo.

Guardaron silencio un instante; él, de la parte de fuera,[1] ella dentro del portal con el velón en una mano y apoyándose con la otra en el quicio de la puerta.

— Ayer — dijo la joven — había soñado con[2] zapatos... es de buen agüero: por eso tenía tanto empeño en que la hablases.[3]

— Ya ves — replicó él sonriendo con melancolía — que no hay que fiar de sueños.

Después de otro instante de silencio, los dos exten-

dieron las manos y se las estrecharon diciendo casi al mismo tiempo:

—Adiós, Elisa.

—Adiós, José.

IV

Cuando la pesca anda escasa por la costa de Vizcaya,[1] suelen venir algunas lanchas de aquella tierra á pescar en aguas de Santander[2] y de Asturias. Sus tripulantes eligen el puerto que más les place y pasan en él la costera del bonito, que dura próximamente desde Junio á Setiembre. Mientras permanecen á su abrigo, observan la misma vida que los marineros del país, salen juntos á la mar y tornan á la misma hora: la única diferencia es que los vizcaínos comen y duermen en sus lanchas, donde se aderezan toscamente una vivienda para la noche, protegiéndolas con toldos embreados y tapizándolas con alguna vela vieja que les permita acostarse, mientras los naturales se van tranquilamente á reposar á sus casas. Ni hay rivalidades ni desabrimientos entre ellos: los vizcaínos son de natural pacífico y bondadoso; los asturianos, más vivos de genio y más astutos, pero generosos y hospitalarios. Cuando navegan, se ayudan y se comunican cordialmente el resultado que obtienen: después que saltan en tierra, acuden juntos á las tabernas y departen amigablemente, apurando algunas copas de vino. Los vizcaínos son más sobrios que los asturianos; rara vez se embriagan: éstos, dados como los pueblos meridionales á la burla y al epigrama, los embroman por su virtud.

Uno de tales vizcaínos fué el padre de José. Cuan-

do vino con otros un verano á la pesca, la madre era una hermosa joven, viuda, con dos hijas de corta edad, que se veia y deseaba[1] para alimentarlas trabajando de tostadora en una bodega de escabeche. El padre de José trabó relaciones con ella, y la sedujo dándola palabra de casamiento. La bella Teresa esperó en vano por él: á los pocos meses supo[2] que había contraído matrimonio con otra en su país.

Teresa era de temperamento impetuoso y ardiente, apasionada en sus amores como en sus odios, pronta á enojarse por livianos motivos, desbocada y colérica: tenía el amor propio brutal de la gente ignorante, y le faltaba el contrapeso del buen sentido que ésta suele poseer; sus reyertas con las vecinas eran conocidas de todos; se había hecho temible por su lengua, tanto como por sus manos. Cuando la cólera la prendía, se metamorfoseaba en una furia; sus grandes ojos negros y hermosos adquirían expresión feroz y todas sus facciones se descomponían. Los habitantes de Rodillero al oírla vociferar en la calle, sacudían la cabeza con disgusto, diciendo: « Ya está escandalizando esa loca de Ramón de la Puente » (así llamaban á su difunto marido).

La traición de su amante la hizo adolecer de rabia: hubiera quedado satisfecha con tomar de él sangrienta venganza. Las pobres hijas pagaron durante una temporada el delito del seductor: no se dirigía á ellas sino con gritos que las aterraban; la más mínima falta les costaba crueles azotes: en todo el día no se oían más que golpes y lamentos en la oscura bodega donde la viuda habitaba.

Bajo tales auspicios salió nuestro José á la luz del

día. Teresa no pudo ni quiso criarlo: entrególo á una aldeana que se avino á hacerlo mediante algunos reales, y siguió dedicada á las penosas tareas de su oficio. Cuando al cabo de dos años la nodriza se lo trajo, no supo qué hacer de él; dejólo entregado á sus hermanitas, que á su vez le abandonaban para irse á jugar: el pobre niño lloraba horas enteras tendido sobre la tierra apisonada[1] de la bodega, sin recibir el consuelo de una caricia: cuando lo arrastraban consigo á la calle era para sentarlo en ella medio desnudo con riesgo de ser pisado por las bestias ó atropellado por un carro. Si alguna vecina lo recogía por caridad, Teresa, al llegar á casa, en vez de agradecérselo, la apostrofaba « por meterse en la vida ajena.»[2]

Cuando José creció un poco, esta aversión se manifestó claramente en los malos tratos que le hizo padecer. Si había sido siempre fiera y terrible con sus hijas legítimas, cualquiera[3] puede figurarse lo que sería con aquel niño hijo de un hombre aborrecido, testimonio vivo de su flaqueza. José fué mártir en su infancia. No se pasaba día sin que por un motivo ó por otro no sintiese los estragos de la mano maternal: cuando por inadvertencia ejecutaba la más leve falta, el pobre niño se echaba á temblar y corría á ocultarse en cualquier rincón del pueblo; mas no le valía: Teresa, encendida por la ira, con el palo de la escoba en la mano, iba por las calles en su busca,[4] vomitando amenazas, desgreñada como una furia, seguida por los chiquillos, que gustan siempre de presenciar los espectáculos trágicos, hasta que daba con él y lo traía arrastrando para casa. Si algún vecino de buen corazón, desde la puerta de su vivienda la recriminaba por tanta

crueldad, ¡eran de oír[1] los denuestos y los insultos que salían vibrantes y agudos de la boca de la viuda contra el imprudente censor! el cual, corrido y avergonzado, la mayor parte de las veces se veía obligado á retirarse.

Asistió poco tiempo á la escuela, donde mostró una inteligencia viva y lúcida, que se apagó muy pronto con las rudas faenas de la pesca. Á los doce años le metió su madre de *rapaz*[2] en una lancha, á fin de que con el medio quiñón que le tocaba en el reparto ayudase al sostenimiento de la casa. Halló el cambio favorable: pasar el día en la mar era preferible á pasarlo en la escuela recibiendo los palmetazos del maestro: el patrón rara vez le pegaba, los marineros le trataban casi como un compañero; la mayor parte de los días se iba á la cama sin haber recibido ningún golpe: sólo á la hora de levantarse para salir á la mar acostumbraba su madre á despavilarle[3] con algunos mojicones. Además, sentía orgullo en ganar el pan por sí mismo.

Á los diez y seis años era un muchacho robusto, de facciones correctas, aunque algo desfiguradas por los rigores de la intemperie, tardo en sus movimientos como todos los marinos, que hablaba poco y sonreía tristemente, sujeto á la autoridad maternal, lo mismo que cuando tenía siete años. Mostró ser en la mar diligente y animoso, y ganó por esta razón primero que otros la soldada completa. Á los diez y nueve años, seducido por un capitán de barco, dejó la pesca y comenzó á navegar en una fragata que seguía la carrera de América. Gozó entonces de independencia completa, aunque voluntariamente remitía á su madre una parte del sueldo. Pero el apego á su pueblo, el recuer-

do de sus compañeros de infancia, y por más que parezca raro, el amor á su familia, fueron poderosos á hacerle abandonar, al cabo de algunos años, la navegación de altura,[1] y emprender nuevamente el oficio de pescador. Fué, no obstante, con mejor provisión y aparejo, pues en el tiempo que navegó, consiguió juntar de sus pacotillas algún dinero, y con él compró una lancha. Desde entonces cambió bastante su suerte: el dueño de una lancha, en lugar tan pobre como Rodillero, juega papel principal; entre los marineros fué casi un personaje, uniéndose al respeto de la posición el aprecio á su valor y destreza. Comenzó á trabajar con mucha fortuna: en obra de dos años, como sus necesidades no eran grandes, ahorró lo bastante para construír otra lancha.

Por este tiempo fijó su atención en Elisa, que era hermosa entre las hermosas de Rodillero, buena, modesta, trabajadora y con fama de rica: si no la hubiera fijado, le hubieran obligado á ello las palabras de sus amigos y los consejos de las comadres del pueblo: — « José, ¿por qué no cortejas á la hija de la maestra? No hay otra en Rodillero que más te convenga. — José, tú debías casarte con la hija de la maestra; es una chica como una plata,[2] buena y callada; no seas tonto, dile algo. — La mejor pareja para ti, José, sería la hija de la maestra . . .» — Tanto se lo repitieron, que al fin comenzó á mirarla con buenos ojos. Por su parte ella escuchaba idénticas sugestiones respecto al marinero, donde quiera que iba; no se cansaban de encarecerla su gallarda presencia, su aplicación y conducta.

Pero José era tímido con exceso; en cuanto se sintió enamorado, lo fué mucho más. Por largo tiempo, la

única señal que dió del tierno sentimiento que Elisa le inspiraba fué seguirla tenazmente con la vista donde quiera que la hallaba, huyendo, no obstante, el tropezar con ella cara á cara. Lo cual no impidió que la joven se pusiera al tanto muy pronto de lo que en el alma del pescador acaecía. Y en justa correspondencia, comenzó á dirigirle con disimulo alguna de esas miradas[1] como relámpagos con que las doncellas saben iluminar el corazón de los enamorados. José las sentía, las gozaba, pero no osaba dar un paso para acercarse á ella. Un día confesó á su amigo Bernardo sus ansias amorosas, y el vivo deseo que tenía de hablar con la hija de la maestra. Aquel se rió no poco de su timidez, y le instó fuertemente para que la venciese; mas por mucho que hizo, no consiguió nada.

El tiempo se pasaba y las cosas seguían en tal estado, con visible disgusto de la joven, que desconfiaba ya de verlas nunca[2] en vías de arreglo.[3] Bernardo, observando á su amigo cada día más triste y vergonzoso, determinó sacarle de apuros. Una tarde de romería[4] paseaban ambos algo apartados de la gente por la pradera, cuando vieron llegar hacia ellos, también de paseo, á varias jóvenes: Elisa venía entre ellas. Sonrió maliciosamente el festivo marinero, halagado por una idea que en aquel momento se le ocurrió; hizo algunas maniobras á fin de pasar muy cerca de las jóvenes, y cuando le fué posible ¡zás! da un fuerte empujón á su amigo, y le hace chocar con Elisa, diciendo al mismo tiempo: — « Elisa, ahí tienes á José.» Después se alejó velozmente. José confuso y ruborizado quedó frente á frente de la hermosa joven, también ruborizada y confusa. — « Buenas tardes,» — acertó al fin á

decir. — « Buenas tardes,» — respondió ella. Y fué cosa hecha.

El amor en los hombres reflexivos, callados y virtuosos, prende, casi siempre, con fortaleza. La pasión de José, primera y única de su vida, echó profundas raíces en poco tiempo: Elisa pagó cumplidamente su deuda de cariño: mostróse propicia la astuta maestra: los vecinos lo vieron con agrado; todo sonrió en un principio[1] á los enamorados.

Mas hé aquí que á la entrada misma del puerto, cuando ya el marinero tocaba su dicha con la mano, comienza el barco á hacer agua.[2] Quedó aturdido y confuso; el corazón le decía que el obstáculo no era de poco momento, sino grave. Una tristeza grande, que semejaba desconsuelo, se apoderó de su ánimo al sentir detrás el golpe de la puerta de Elisa, y quedar en las tinieblas de la calle. Cruzaron por su imaginación muchos presentimientos; el pecho se le oprimió, y sin haber corrido nada, se detuvo un instante á tomar aliento. Después, mientras caminaba, hizo esfuerzos vanos para apartar de sí la tristeza por medio de cuerdas reflexiones: nada estaba perdido todavía: la señá Isabel no había hecho más que aplazar la boda sin oponerse á ella; en último resultado,[3] sin su anuencia se podía llevar á cabo.[4]

Sumido en sus cavilaciones,[5] no vió el bulto de una persona que venía por la calle hasta tropezar con ella.

— Buenas noches, D. Fernando — dijo al reconocerlo.

— Hola, José; me alegro de encontrarte: tú me podrás decir cuál es el camino mejor para ir al Robledal[6] ... mejor dicho, á la casa de D. Eugenio Soliva.

— El mejor camino es el de Sarrió hasta Antromero, y allí tomar[1] el de Nueva, pasando por delante de la iglesia. Es un poco más largo, pero ahora de noche hay peligro en ir por la playa . . . ¿Pero cómo hace V. un viaje tan largo á estas horas?[2] Son cerca de dos leguas . . .

— Tengo negocios que ventilar con D. Eugenio — dijo el Sr. de Meira con ademán misterioso.

Los labios del marinero se contrajeron con una leve sonrisa.

— Yo voy á entrar en la taberna á tomar algo. ¿Quiere acompañarme antes de seguir su viaje, D. Fernando?

— Gracias, José; acepto el convite para darte una prueba más de mi estimación — respondió el Sr. de Meira, colocando su mano protectora sobre el hombro del marinero.

Ambos entraron en la taberna más próxima y se fueron á sentar en un rincón apartado: pidió José pan, queso y vino; comió y bebió el Sr. de Meira con singular apetito; el joven le miraba con el rabillo del ojo[3] y sonreía. Cuando terminaron, salieron otra vez á la calle despidiéndose como buenos amigos. El pescador siguió un instante con la vista al caballero y murmuró:

— ¡Pobre D. Fernando! ¡Tenía hambre!

La figura de éste se borró entre las sombras de la noche. Iba, como otras muchas veces, á pedir dinero á préstamo. En el pueblo todos tenían noticia de estas excursiones secretas por los pueblos comarcanos; á veces extendía sus correrías hasta los puntos más lejanos de la provincia, siempre de noche y con sigilo. Por

desgracia, el Sr. de Meira tornaba casi siempre como había ido, con los bolsillos vacíos; pero erguido siempre y con alientos[1] para emprender otra campaña.

Prosiguió José su camino hacia casa, á donde llegó á los pocos instantes. Halló á su madre en la cocina y cerca de ella á sus dos hermanas. Al verlas se oscureció aún más su semblante. Estas hermanas, de más edad que él, estaban casadas hacía ya largo tiempo; una de ellas tenía seis hijos. Vivían cada cual en su casa; el marinero sabía por experiencia que siempre que se juntaban con su madre, de quien habían heredado el genio y la lengua, caía sobre él algún daño. Aquel conciliábulo á hora inusitada le pareció de muy mal agüero; y él, que todos los días arrostraba las iras del océano, se echó á temblar delante de aquellas tres mujeres reunidas á modo de tribunal. Antes de que la borrasca, que presentía, se desatase, trató de marchar á la cama, pretestando cansancio.

—¿No cenas, José?—le preguntó su madre.

—No tengo gana: he tomado algo en la taberna.

—¿Has hecho cuenta con la señá Isabel?

Esta pregunta era el primer trueno. José la escuchó con terror, contestando, no obstante, en tono indiferente:

—Ya la hemos hecho.

—¿Y cuánto te ha tocado de estas mareas?[2]—volvió á preguntar la madre mientras revolvía el fuego afectando distracción.

El segundo trueno había estallado mucho más cerca.

—No lo sé—respondió José, fingiendo como antes indiferencia.

—¿No traes ahí el dinero?

— Sí señora, pero hasta mañana que[1] haga cuenta con la compaña, no sé á punto fijo lo que me corresponde.

Hubo una pausa larga. El marinero, aunque tenía los ojos en el suelo, sentía sobre el rostro las miradas inquisitoriales de sus hermanas, que hasta entonces no habían abierto la boca. Su madre seguía revolviendo el fuego.

— ¿Y á cómo le has puesto el bonito hoy? — dijo al fin ésta.

— ¿Á cómo se lo había de poner, madre... no lo sabe? — contestó José titubeando.

— No; no lo sé — replicó Teresa dejando el hierro sobre el hogar y levantando con resolución la cabeza.

El marinero bajó la suya y balbució más que dijo:

— Al precio corriente... á real y medio...

— ¡Mientes! ¡mientes! — gritó ella con furor avanzando un paso y clavándole sus ojos llameantes.

— ¡Mientes! ¡mientes! — dijeron casi al mismo tiempo sus hermanas.

José guardó silencio sin osar disculparse.

— ¡Lo sabemos todo!... ¡todo! — prosiguió Teresa en el mismo tono. — Sabemos que me has estado engañando miserablemente desde que comenzó la costera, gran tuno; que estás regalando el bonito á esa bribona, mientras tu madre está trabajando como una perra, después de haber sudado toda su vida para mantenerte...

— Si trabaja es porque quiere; bien lo sabe — dijo el marinero humildemente.

— ¡Y todo por quién! — siguió Teresa sin querer escuchar la advertencia de su hijo. — Por esa sin ver-

güenza[1] que se ríe de ti, que te roba el sudor echándote de cebo á su hija,[2] para darte á la postre con la puerta en los hocicos[3] . . .

Estas palabras hirieron á José en lo más vivo del alma.

— Madre — exclamó con emoción, — no sé por qué ha tomado tanta ojeriza á Elisa y á su madre. Aunque me case, por eso no la abandono. La lancha que ahora tengo queda para V. . . y si más le hace falta, más tendrá . . .

— ¿ Pero tú crees casarte, inocente ? — dijo una de las hermanas sonriendo sarcásticamente.

— Nada tenéis que partir vosotras en este negocio — replicó el marinero volviéndose airado hacia ella.

— Tiene razón tu hermana ¡ tonto ! ¡ tonto ! — vociferó de nuevo la madre. — ¿ No ves que estás sirviendo de hazme reír[4] al pueblo ? ¿ No ves que esa bruja te está engañando como á un chino[5] para chuparte la sangre ?

El pobre José, hostigado de tan cruel manera, no pudo guardar más tiempo la actitud humilde que tenía frente á su madre, y replicó alzando la cabeza con dignidad :

— Soy dueño de dar lo que es mío á quien me parezca.[6] Usted, madre, no tiene razón ninguna para quejarse . . . Hasta ahora lo que he ganado ha sido de V. . .

— ¿ Y me lo echas en cara,[7] pícaro ? — gritó aquélla cada vez más furiosa. ¡ No me faltaba ya más que eso ![8] . . . Después de haber pasado tantos trabajos para criarte ; después de quemarme la cara al pie de las calderas,[9] y andar arrastrada[10] de día y de noche para

llevarte á ti y á tus hermanas un pedazo de pan, ¿me insultas de ese modo?...

Aquí Teresa se dejó caer sobre una silla y comenzó á sollozar fuertemente.

—¡Quiero morir antes de verme insultada por mi hijo!—siguió diciendo entre gemidos y lágrimas. ¡Dejadme morir!... ¡Para qué estoy yo en el mundo si el único hijo que tengo me echa en cara el pan que como!...

Y á este tenor prosiguió desatándose en quejas y lamentos, sacudiendo la cabeza con desesperación y alzando las manos al cielo.

Las hijas acudieron solícitas á consolarla. José, asustado del efecto de sus palabras, no sabía qué hacer; ni tuvo ánimo para contestar á sus hermanas, que mientras cuidaban de su madre se volvían hacia él apostrofándole:

«¡Anda tú,[1] mal hijo! ¡Vergüenza había de darte![2] ¿Quieres matar á tu madre, verdad?[3] Algún día te ha de castigar Dios...»

Aguantó el chubasco con resignación, y cuando vió á su madre un poco más sosegada, se retiró silenciosamente á su cuarto. Llevaba el corazón tan oprimido, que no pudo en largo espacio conciliar el sueño.

V

Con la llegada del nuevo día mitigóse su pesar, y entendió claramente que no había motivo para tanto apesadumbrarse: el obstáculo que de noche le había parecido insuperable, á la luz del sol lo juzgó liviano;

crecieron sus ánimos para vencerlo, y la esperanza volvió á inundar su corazón.

Y en efecto, los acontecimientos pareció que justificaban[1] este salto repentino de la tristeza á la alegría. En los días siguientes halló á la señá Isabel más amable que nunca, favoreciendo con empeño sus amores, dándole á entender con obras, ya que no de palabra, que sería, más tarde ó más temprano, el marido de Elisa. Ésta cobró también confianza y se puso á hacer cuentas galanas[2] para lo porvenir, esperando vencer la resistencia de su madre y abreviar el plazo del casamiento.

Por otra parte, la fortuna siguió sonriendo á José. El día de San Juan, según tenía pensado, botó al agua la nueva lancha, la cual comenzó á brincar suelta y ligera sobre las olas, prometiéndole muchos y buenos días de pesca: vino el cura á bendecirla y hubo después en la taberna el indispensable jolgorio entre la gente llamada á tripularla. Encargóse el mismo José del mando de ella, dejando la vieja á otro patrón, y desde el día siguiente principió á hacerla trabajar en la pesca del bonito. Ésta fué abundante, como pocas veces se había visto; tanto que nuestro marinero, apesar de las sangrías que la señá Isabel le hacía en cada saldo de cuentas, iba en camino de hacerse rico.

¡Qué verano tan dichoso aquél! Elisa, á fuerza de instancias, consiguió arrancar á su madre el permiso para casarse al terminar la costera, ó sea[3] en el mes de Octubre. Y dormidos inocentemente sobre esta promesa, los amantes gozaron de la dulce perspectiva de su próxima unión; entraron en esa época de la vida, risueña como ninguna,[4] en que el cielo sólo ofrece son-

risas y la tierra flores á los enamorados. El trabajo era para ambos un manantial riquísimo de placeres: cada bonito que prendía en los anzuelos de José y entraba saltando en su lancha, parecía un heraldo que le anunciaba su boda: cuando tornaba á casa con doscientas piezas bullendo sobre los paneles, pensaba que aquel día había dado un gran paso hacia Elisa. Ésta, dentro de la fábrica, no se daba tampoco punto de reposo; todo el día ocupada en vigilar las operaciones de pesar, cortar, salar, tostar y empaquetar el pescado; al llegar la noche ya no podía tenerse en pie; pero se dejaba caer en la cama con la sonrisa en los labios, diciendo para sí: « Es necesario trabajar de firme; mañana tendremos hijos[1] . . . » La hora más feliz para Elisa era la que precedía á la cena; entonces llegaba José á la tienda y se formaba una sabrosa tertulia, que les consentía[2] acercarse uno á otro y cambiar frecuentes palabras y miradas. Rara vez se decían amores: no había necesidad; para los que aman mucho, cualquier conversación va empapada[3] de amor. De esta hora, los minutos más dichosos eran aquellos en que se despedían; ella con el velón en la mano, como la hemos visto la noche en que la conocimos;[4] él de la parte de fuera, apoyado en el marco de la puerta; en estos momentos solían cambiar con labio trémulo algo de lo que llenaba por entero sus corazones, hasta que la voz de la señá Isabel, llamando á su hija, rompía tristemente el encanto.

Aun por el día gozaba la hermosa doncella de otra hora feliz: era la de la siesta. Cuando su madre, después de comer, se acostaba un poco sobre la cama, acostumbraba Elisa salirse de casa y subir á uno de los montes que rodean el pueblo á disfrutar de la vista y

del fresco de la mar. Á esta hora, en los días de Julio y Agosto, el calor era sofocante en Rodillero: la brisa del océano no penetraba más que en las primeras revueltas, dejando la mayor parte del lugar asfixiada entre las montañas laterales. La joven ascendía lentamente por un ancho sendero abierto entre los pinos, hasta la capilla de San Esteban, colocada en la cima del monte, y se sentaba á la sombra. Desde aquel punto se oteaba una gran extensión de mar, sobre el cual irradiaba el sol su fuego: el cielo mostraba un azul oscuro por la parte de tierra;[1] por la del mar, más claro, trasformándose en color gris al cerrar el horizonte.[2] Algunas nubes blancas é hinchadas se amontonaban por la parte de Levante, sobre el pico de Peñas, el más saliente de la costa cantábrica:[3] éste y los demás cabos lejanos se mostraban apenas entre la faja gris del horizonte, mientras el de San Antonio, más cercano, detrás del cual estaba la bahía de Sarrió, recibiendo de lleno los rayos del sol, ofrecía grato color de naranja. Los ojos de Elisa iban presurosos á buscar en las profundidades del mar las lanchas pescadoras que acostumbraban á mantenerse frente á la boca de Rodillero, á larga distancia, borrándose casi entre la tenue ceniza suspendida sobre el horizonte. Contaba con afán aquellos puntos blancos, y se esforzaba con ilusión en averiguar[4] cuál de ellos sería[5] la lancha de su novio. — «Aquélla que va un poco apartada á la izquierda, aquélla debe de ser; se conoce porque la vela es más blanca; ¡como que[6] es nueva! Además, á él le gusta siempre ir un poco separado y campar por sus respetos[7] . . . No hay quien huela el pescado como él.» — Y mecida por esta ilusión, seguía con anhelo las manio-

bras de aquella lancha, que ora se alejaba hasta perderse de vista, bien[1] se acercaba. Á veces advertía que tomaban todas el camino del puerto: entonces torcía el gesto,[2] exclamando: — « ¡ Malo ! hoy no hay mucho bonito.» — Pero en el fondo de su alma luchaba el gozo con la tristeza, porque de este modo iba á ver antes[3] á su amante. Aguardaba todavía un rato hasta verlas salir poco á poco del vapor ceniciento que las envolvía, y entrar en la región luminosa. Parecían con sus velas apuntadas, blancos fantasmas resbalando suavemente sobre el agua; y cual si obedeciesen á un signo hecho por mano invisible, todas se iban acercando entre sí y formaban al poco tiempo una diminuta escuadra. Cuando ya las veía próximas se bajaba al pueblo á toda prisa; á nadie daba cuenta, ni aún al mismo José, de aquellos instantes de dicha que en la soledad del monte de San Esteban gozaba.

El tiempo se iba deslizando, no tan veloz como nuestros enamorados deseaban, pero sí mucho más de lo que á la señá Isabel convenía. Ésta no podía pensar en el matrimonio de Elisa sin sentir movimientos de terror y de ira, pues al realizarse era forzoso dejar la fábrica y otros bienes de su difunto esposo en poder del de su hija. Y aunque estaba resuelta en cualquier caso á oponerse con todas sus fuerzas á esta boda, todavía le disgustaba mucho el verse obligada á poner de manifiesto[4] su oposición, temiendo que el amor guiase á Elisa á algún acto de rebeldía. Por eso su cabeza, rellena[5] de maldades, no se cansaba de trabajar arbitrando recursos[6] para deshacer aquel lazo y volver sobre[7] la promesa que le habían arrancado. Al fin pensó hallar uno seguro, mediante cierta infame maquinación

que el demonio, sin duda, le sugirió, estando desvelada en la cama.

Había en el pueblo un mozo reputado entre la gente por tonto ó mentecato, hijo del sacristán de la parroquia; contaba ya veinte años bien cumplidos y no conocía las letras, ni se ocupaba en otra cosa que en tocar las campanas de la iglesia (por cierto con arte magistral), y en discurrir solitario por las orillas de la mar extrayendo de los huecos de las peñas lapas, cangrejos, bígaros[1] y pulpos, en cuyas[2] operaciones era también maestro. Mofábanse de él los muchachos, y le corrían[3] á menudo por la calle con grita intolerable: lo que más le vejaba al pobre Rufo (tal era su nombre) era el oír que su casa se estaba cayendo; bastaba esto para que los chicuelos le dieran en lo vivo[4] sin cansarse jamás: donde quiera que iba, oía una voz infantil que de lejos ó de cerca, ordinariamente de lejos, le gritaba: — « Cayó,[5] Rufo, cayó.» — Enojábase el infeliz al escucharlo, como si fuese una injuria sangrienta; llameaban sus ojos y echaba espuma por la boca, y en esta disposición corría como una fiera detrás del chicuelo, que tenía buen cuidado de poner al instante tierra por medio,[6] cuanta más, mejor; alguna vez el exceso de la ira le había hecho dar sin sentido en el suelo.[7] Los vecinos le compadecían, y no dejaban de reprender ásperamente á los muchachos su crueldad, cuando presenciaban tales escenas.

Sabíase en el pueblo que Rufo alimentaba en su pecho una pasión viva y ardiente hacia la hija de la maestra; esto servía también de pretexto para embromarlo, si bien eran hombres ya los que se placían en ello.[8] Al pasar por delante de un grupo de marineros,

le llamaban casi siempre para darle alguna noticia referente á Elisa: una vez le decían que ésta se había casado por la mañana, lo cual dejaba yerto y acongojado al pobre tonto; otro día le aconsejaban que fuese á pedir su mano á la señá Isabel, porque sabían de buena tinta[1] que la niña estaba enamorada de él en secreto, ó bien que la robase, si la maestra no consentía en hacerlos felices. También mezclaban el nombre de José en estas bromas; decían pestes de él llamándole feo, intrigante y mal pescador, lo cual hacía reír y hasta dar saltos de alegría al idiota, y poniéndole en parangón con él, aseguraban muy serios que Rufo era incomparablemente más gallardo, y que si no pescaba tanto, en cambio tocaba mejor las campanas. De esta suerte, al compás que[2] iba creciendo en el pecho del tonto la afición á Elisa, iba aumentando también el odio hacia José, á quien consideraba como su enemigo mortal, hasta el punto de que no tropezaba jamás con él sin que dejase de echarle[3] miradas iracundas y murmurase palabras injuriosas, de las cuales, como era natural, se reía el afortunado marinero.

Elisa se reía también de este amor, que lisonjeaba, no obstante, su vanidad de mujer; porque la admiración es bien recibida, aunque venga de los tontos. Cuando encontraba á Rufo por la calle le ponía semblante halagüeño[4] y le hablaba en el tono protector y cariñoso que se dispensa á los niños: gozaba con las muecas y carocas de perro fiel en que se deshacía el tonto[5] al verla: le prometía formalmente casarse con él, siempre que[6] obedeciese á su padre y no pegase á los chicos. Rufo preguntaba con expresión de anhelo: — ¿Para cuándo? — Amigo, no lo sé — respondía ella,

— pregúntaselo al Santo Cristo, á ver[1] lo que te dice. — Y el pobre se pasaba horas enteras de rodillas en la iglesia, preguntando al célebre Cristo[2] de Rodillero cuándo sería su boda, sin obtener contestación. — Es que todavía no quiere que nos casemos — le decía Elisa, — ten paciencia y sé bueno, que ya se ablandará.

La señá Isabel imaginó utilizar la pasión de este mentecato para romper, ó por lo menos aplazar la unión de su hija con José. Un día salió paseando por las orillas de la mar, donde sabía que Rufo se hallaba á caza de cangrejos, y se hizo con él encontradiza.[3]

— ¿Qué tal,[4] Rufo, caen muchos?[5]

El tonto levantó la cabeza, y al ver á la madre de Elisa, sonrió.

— Marea muerta,[6] coge poco[7] — contestó en el lenguaje incompleto y particular que usaba.

— Vaya, vaya, no son tan pocos — replicó la señá Isabel acercándose más y echando una mirada al cestillo donde tenía la pesca. — Buena fortuna tiene contigo tu padre; todos los días le llevas á casa un cesto de cangrejos.

— Padre no gusta cangrejos[8] . . . tira todos á la calle . . . y pega á Rufo con un palo . . .

— ¿Te pega porque coges cangrejos?

— Sí, señá Isabel.

— Pues no tiene gusto tu padre; los cangrejos son muy ricos. Mira, cuando tu padre no los quiera, me los llevas á mí; á Elisa le gustan mucho.

El rostro flaco y taciturno del idiota se animó repentinamente al escuchar el nombre de Elisa.

— ¿Gusta Elisa cangrejos?

— Mucho.

— Todos, Elisa;[1] todos, Elisa — dijo con énfasis, extendiendo las manos y señalando la orilla de la mar.

— Gracias, Rufo, gracias; tú quieres mucho á Elisa, ¿verdad?

— Sí, señá Isabel, yo quiere mucho Elisa.[2]

— ¿Te casarías con ella de buena gana?

El rostro del tonto se contrajo extremadamente por una sonrisa; quedó confuso y avergonzado mirando á la señá Isabel sin atreverse á contestar.

— Vamos, di, ¿no te casarías?

— Usté[3] no quiere — dijo al fin tímidamente.

— ¿Yo no quiero? ¿Quién te ha dicho eso?

— Usté quiere José.

— ¡Bah! si José fuese pobre no le querría: tú me gustas más; eres más guapo, y no hay en Rodillero quien toque como tú las campanas.

— José no sabe — dijo el idiota con acento triunfal, manifestando una gran alegría.

—¡Qué ha de saber! José no sabe más que pescar bonito y merluza . . .

— Y besugo — apuntó Rufo, pasando súbito del gozo á la tristeza.

— Bueno; besugo también, ¿y qué? En cambio tú pescas cangrejos y pulpos . . . y lapas . . .y bígaros . . . y erizos . . . y ostras. Además, tú pescas solo, sin ayuda de nadie, mientras José necesita que le ayuden los amigos: ¿quieres decirme lo que pescaría José si no tuviese una lancha?

— Tiene dos — volvió á apuntar tristemente Rufo.

— Bien, pero la vieja ya vale poco . . . ¡Si no fuese por la nueva! . . . Si no fuese por la nueva no le daría yo á Elisa, ¿sabes tú? . . .

Los ojos zarcos y apagados del idiota brillaron un instante con expresión de ira.

— Yo echo pique[1] lancha nueva — exclamó dando[2] con las tenazas que tenía en la mano sobre la peña.

— Porque José tiene obligaciones á que atender — siguió la vieja, como si no hubiese oído estas palabras. — Necesita alimentar á su madre, que pronto dejará de trabajar, mientras que tú eres libre: tu padre gana bastante para mantenerse; además, tienes un hermano rico en la Habana...

— Tiene reloj — dijo Rufo interrumpiéndola.

— Sí, ya lo sé.

— Y cadena de oro que cuelga, señá Isabel.

— Ya sé, ya sé; tú también la tendrías si te casases con mi hija. Serías amo de la fábrica, y ganarías mucho dinero... y comprarías un caballo para ir á las romerías con Elisa; ella delante y tú detrás, como va el señor cura de Arnedo, con el ama... y tendrías botas de montar,[3] como el hijo de don Casimiro.

La vieja fué desenvolviendo un cuadro de dicha inocente sin olvidar ningún pormenor, por sandio que fuese, que pudiese halagar al tonto. Éste la escuchaba embebecido y suspenso, sonriendo beatíficamente, como si tuviese delante una visión celestial. Cuando terminó la señá Isabel su descripción, hubo un rato de silencio: al fin volvió á decir, sacudiendo la cabeza con pesar:

— ¡Si no fuese por José! — Y se quedó mirando reflexivamente al mar.

Rufo se estremeció como si le hubiesen pinchado; puso el semblante hosco, y miró también fijamente al horizonte.

— Vaya, Rufo, me voy hacia casa, que ya me estará esperando Elisa; hasta la vista.[1]

— Adiós — dijo el tonto, sin volver siquiera la cabeza.

La señá Isabel se alejó lentamente. Cuando estuvo ya á larga distancia, se volvió para mirarle. Seguía inmóvil, con los ojos clavados en el mar, como le había dejado.

VI

Acaeció, como todos los años, que el número harto considerable de lanchas vizcaínas ocasionó, al fin de la costera del bonito, algún malestar en Rodillero. Eran tantas las embarcaciones que se juntaban por las tardes en la ribera, que los pescadores no podían botarlas todas á tierra; por muy arriba que[2] subiesen las primeras que llegaban de la mar, las últimas no tenían ya sitio y se veían precisados sus dueños á dejarlas en los dominios de la marea, amarradas á las otras. Esto causaba algunos disgustos y desazones; se murmuraba bastante, y se dirigían de vez en cuando vivas reclamaciones al cabo de mar;[3] pero éste no podía impedir que los vizcaínos continuasen en el puerto, mientras la comandancia[4] de Sarrió no ordenase su partida. Las reyertas, sin embargo, no eran tantas ni tan ásperas como pudiera esperarse, debido al temperamento pacífico, lo mismo de los naturales, que de los forasteros.

Mientras el tiempo fué propicio (y lo es casi siempre allí en los meses de Junio, Julio y Agosto), todo marchó bastante bien; mas al llegar Setiembre, creció la

discordia y la murmuración, con el peligro de las embarcaciones que quedaban á flote. Aunque el cielo se muestre sereno en este mes y el viento no sople recio, á menudo se levanta marejada, la cual procede de temporales que se forman en otras regiones apartadas. Estas mares gruesas,[1] que reinan en aquella costa gran parte del otoño, inquietaban á los armadores, temiendo que la hora menos pensada[2] rompiesen las amarras de los barcos, y diesen con ellos al través.[3] No había más que bajar por la noche á la ribera para convencerse de que tales temores eran fundados. La mar hacía bailar á las lanchas; embestían unas contra otras duramente, y rechinaban cual si se quejasen de los testerazos, produciendo en el silencio y la oscuridad rumor semejante al de una muchedumbre agitada; parecía en ocasiones plática sabrosa que unas con otras tenían entablada acerca de los varios lances de su vida azarosa; otras veces disputa acalorada, donde todas á la vez querían mezclarse y dar su opinión; otras, grave y encendida pelea, en que algunas iban á perecer deshechas.

Un suceso desdichado vino al fin á dar la razón á los que[4] más levantiscos[5] andaban y con más afán pedían la salida de los vizcaínos. En cierta noche oscura, aunque serena, del citado mes, la conversación de las lanchas empezó á ser muy animada desde las primeras horas; pronto degeneró en disputa, que por momentos se fué acalorando; á la una de la madrugada estalló una verdadera y descomunal batalla entre ellas, como nunca antes se había visto. Los vizcaínos, que dormían á bordo, se vieron necesitados á ponerse en pie á toda prisa, y á maniobrar oportunamente para no padecer avería; más de una hora trabajaron esforzada-

mente impidiendo la ruina de muchas lanchas, tanto suyas como de Rodillero, y la deserción de otras, pues las sacudidas eran terribles, y había peligro de que los cabos se quebrasen. Al fin redobló de tal modo la furia de la marejada, que juzgándose impotentes para evitar una catástrofe, corrieron por el pueblo dando la voz de alarma. Acudieron al instante la mayor parte de los hombres y bastantes mujeres; cuando llegaron, algunos barcos se habían abierto ya á poder de[1] las repetidas embestidas. Un vizcaíno llamó con violencia á la puerta de José.

—José, levanta en seguida; tienes perdida lancha.[2]

El marinero se alzó despavorido de la cama, se metió los pantalones y la chaqueta apresuradamente, y corrió descalzo y sin nada en la cabeza á la ribera. Antes de llegar con mucho, su oído delicado percibió entre el estruendo de las olas un ruido seco de malísimo agüero. El espectáculo que confusamente se ofreció á su vista le dejó suspenso.

La mar estaba picada de veras; el trajín[3] de las lanchas que habían quedado á flote era vertiginoso: las embestidas menudeaban; entre el rumor estruendoso de las olas escuchábase más claramente aquel ruido seco semejante al crujido de huesos. Uníase á este formidable rumor las voces de los hombres, cuyas siluetas se agitaban también vivamente entre las sombras, acudiendo á salvar sus barcos: increpábanse mutuamente por no evitar el choque de las lanchas; pedían cabos para sujetarlas; procuraban á toda costa apartarlas y dejarlas aisladas; gritaban las mujeres temiendo más por la vida de los suyos que por la ruina de los barcos; contestaban los hombres á sus llamamientos

con terribles interjecciones: todo ello formaba un ruido infernal que infundía tristeza y pavor. La oscuridad no era tanta que no consintiese distinguir los bultos: muchos habían traído farolillos, que cruzaban velozmente de un lado á otro como estrellas filantes.[1]

Repuesto José de la sorpresa, corrió al sitio donde había quedado su lancha nueva, que era la que estaba en peligro, pues la vieja se encontraba en seco. Su temor, sin embargo, no era grande, porque había tenido la fortuna de llegar á tiempo para anclarla detrás de una peña que avanzaba por el mar formando un muelle natural. Saltó en la embarcación más próxima á la orilla y de una en otra fué pasando hasta el sitio donde la había dejado; pero al llegar se halló con que[2] había desaparecido. En vano la buscó con los ojos por la vecindad; en vano preguntó á sus compañeros; nadie daba cuenta de ella. Por fin uno que llevaba farol le gritó desde tierra:

— José, yo he visto hace rato escapar una lancha; no sé si sería la tuya.

El pobre José recibió un golpe en el corazón: no podía ser otra, porque las demás estaban allí.

— Si es la tuya, no pudo ir muy lejos — le dijo el marinero que estaba á su lado. — El poco viento que hay es forano;[3] la mar la habrá echado en seguida á tierra.

Estas palabras fueron dichas con ánimo de darle algún consuelo y nada más: bien sabía el que las pronunció que con la resaca de aquella noche tanto montaba[4] ser arrastrada por la mar, como echada á tierra.

Sin embargo, José concibió esperanzas.

— Gaspar, dame el farol — gritó al de tierra.

— ¿Dónde vas?

— Por la orilla adelante[1] á ver si la encuentro.

El marinero que le había consolado, movido de lástima, le dijo:

— Yo te acompaño, José.

El del farol dijo lo mismo. Y los tres juntos dejaron apresuradamente la ribera de Rodillero y siguieron el borde de la mar, registrando escrupulosamente todos los parajes donde pensaban que la lancha pudiera quedar barada.[2] Después de caminar cerca de una milla entre peñas, salieron á una vasta playa de arena: allí era donde José tenía cifrada[3] principalmente su esperanza: si la lancha hubiese barado en ella, estaba salvada. Mas después de recorrerla toda despacio, nada vieron.

— Me parece que es inútil ir más adelante, José — dijo Gaspar; — el camino de las peñas debe de estar ya tomado por la mar; está subiendo todavía . . .

José insistió en seguir: tenía esperanza de hallar su lancha en la pequeña ensenada de los Ángeles. Pero la ribera estaba, en efecto, invadida por el agua, y por mucho que se arrimaban á la montaña, todavía los golpes de mar les salpicaban. Uno de estos, al fin, bañó completamente á José y le apagó el farol. Entonces los marineros se negaron resueltamente á dar un paso más; nadie traía cerillas para encenderlo de nuevo; caminar sin luz, era expuesto á romperse la cabeza, ó por lo menos una pierna, entre las peñas. José los animó á volverse pero negándose á seguirlos.

Quedó solo y á oscuras entre la montaña que se alzaba á pico[4] sobre su cabeza, y la mar hirviente y furiosa, cuyas olas, al llegar á tierra, semejaban enormes y

oscuras fauces que quisieran tragarlo. Mas á nuestro marinero no le arredraban las olas ni la oscuridad: saltando de peña en peña y aprovechando los instantes de calma para salvar los pasos difíciles, consiguió llegar, ya bastante tarde, á la bahía de los Ángeles. Tampoco allí vió nada, por más que se entretuvo buen espacio á reconocer una por una las peñas todas que la cerraban. Rendido, al fin, y maltrecho, con los pies abiertos,[1] empapado y transido, dió la vuelta para casa.

Cuando llegó á la gran playa cercana á Rodillero ya había amanecido. El sol brillaba sobre el horizonte y comenzaba á ascender majestuosamente por un cielo azul y sereno. El mar seguía embravecido. El agua que bañaba la costa estaba turbia, como siempre que la marejada es de fondo, y se revolvia airada contra los peñascos de la orilla y los batía con fragor: unas veces los tapaba enteramente con un blanco manto de espuma; otras veces los escalaba llena de cólera y antes de llegar á la cima caía jadeante; otras, en fin, se contentaba con entrar al arma[2] por todos sus huecos y concavidades para enterarse de si había allí algún enemigo escondido y darle muerte; y no hallando á nadie en quien cebar su furor, se retiraba gruñendo y murmurando amenazas para tornar de nuevo y con más bríos á la carga. Sobre la gran playa arenosa, venían las olas en escuadrones cerrados que se renovaban sin cesar; llegaban en línea de batalla altas y formidables sacudiendo su melena de espuma; avanzaban majestuosamente sobre la alfombra dorada, esperando encontrar resistencia; pero al ver libre el campo, se dejaban caer perezosamente, no rendidas á ningún adversario, sino á su misma pesadumbre y fortaleza. Y

en pos de estas venían otras, y otras después al instante, y después otras, y así siempre, sin dar punto de tregua; y todavía allá á lo lejos se columbraban infinitas legiones de ellas que acudían iracundas y erizadas de todos los parajes del globo en socorro de sus compañeras.

La agitación inmensa del océano, puesto por arcana razón en movimiento; aquel vaivén confuso que se extendía hasta la línea indecisa del horizonte, formaba contraste singular con la serenidad riente del firmamento. José detuvo un instante el paso delante de las olas y contempló el panorama con la curiosidad del marino, la cual jamás se agota; no había en su mirada rencor ni desesperación. Avezados á tener su vida y su hacienda en poder de la mar y á ser derrotados en las luchas que con ella sostienen, los pescadores sufren sus inclemencias con resignación y respetan su cólera como la de un Dios irritado y omnipotente. En aquel momento le preocupaba más al marinero un barco que veía allá en los confines del horizonte, batiéndose con las olas, que su propia lancha. Después de observar con atención inteligente sus maniobras un buen rato, siguió caminando hacia el pueblo. Al divisar las primeras casas le asaltó una idea muy triste; pensó que la pérdida de la lancha iba á estorbar de nuevo su matrimonio ya próximo; y como si entonces tan sólo[1] se diese cuenta[2] de que iba medio desnudo y mojado, comenzó á tiritar fuertemente.

VII

El daño causado en Rodillero por aquella gran « vaga de mar » (así llaman los pescadores á la mar alta[1]), fué harto considerable: cuatro ó cinco lanchas desbaratadas, y mucha parte de las otras con avería. Los vizcaínos, á quienes se suponía causantes de él, y lo eran en realidad, aunque de un modo inocente, andaban confusos y avergonzados; en cuanto la mar se aplacó, á los dos días del suceso,[2] izaron vela para su tierra, dejando el puerto más despejado y el lugar tranquilo.

La lancha de José había sido la única arrastrada por el agua, lo cual llamó un poco la atención, porque las amarras de tierra no estaban rotas, sino que habían marchado enteras con el barco; esto no era fácil de explicar, suponiendo, como es lógico, que estuviesen anudadas. Cuando en la baja mar sacó José del agua el ancla de cuatro lengüetas que usan las lanchas, fué grande su sorpresa al ver que el cable no estaba roto por la fuerza de un tirón, sino por medio de cuchillo ó navaja. En vano trató de explicarse de un modo natural aquel extraordinario fenómeno; todo el trabajo de su cerebro era inútil ante la realidad que tenía delante. Al fin, y bien á su pesar,[3] brotó en su alma la sospecha de que allí había andado una mano alevosa.[4] Pero esto le causaba aún mayor sorpresa. ¿De quién podía ser aquella mano? Solamente de un enemigo, y él no tenía ninguno; en el pueblo no había, á su entender,[5] persona capaz de tal villanía. Y para no calum-

niar mentalmente á nadie, obrando con su acostumbrada lealtad, determinó no pensar más en ello, ni dar noticia del terrible descubrimiento. Guardólo, pues, en el fondo de su espíritu, haciendo lo posible[1] por olvidarlo enteramente. La pérdida de la lancha no abatió su ánimo, ni mucho menos;[2] pero las consecuencias que consigo trajo le llenaron de amargura.

La señá Isabel mostró tomar parte muy principal[3] en su pesadumbre; se deshizo en quejas y lamentos; rompió en apóstrofes violentísimos contra los vizcaínos. En todas sus palabras dejaba, sin embargo, traslucir que consideraba muy grave el contratiempo.

—¿No es una vergüenza que esos zánganos forasteros sean los causantes de la ruina de los vecinos de Rodillero?...

Y dirigiéndose á José:

—No te apures, querido, no te apures por quedar arruinado... No te faltará Dios, como no te ha faltado hasta ahora... Trabaja con fe, que mientras uno es joven, siempre hay esperanza de mejorar de fortuna.

Estas palabras de consuelo, dejaban profundamente desconsolado á nuestro marinero, pues le advertían bien claramente de que no había que hablar de matrimonio por entonces. Y, en efecto, dejó correr los días sin soltar[4] palabra alguna referente á él, ni delante de la maestra ni á solas con su novia. Pero la tristeza que se reflejaba en el rostro, acusaba perfectamente el pesar que embargaba su alma: hacía esfuerzos por aparecer sereno y risueño en la tienda del maestro, y procuraba intervenir alegremente en la conversación; mas á lo mejor[5] quedaba serio sin poderlo remediar, y se pasaba la mano por la frente con abatimiento. Algo

semejante le acontecía á Elisa: también comprendía que era inútil hablar de boda á su madre, y trataba de ocultar su desazón sin conseguirlo. En las breves conversaciones que con José tenía, ni uno ni otro osaban decirse nada de aquel asunto; pero en lo inseguro de la voz, en las tristes y largas miradas que se dirigían y en el ligero temblar de sus manos al despedirse, manifestaban sin necesidad de explicarse más claramente que la misma idea los hacía á ambos desgraciados. Lo peor de todo era que no podían calcular ya cuándo se calmarían sus afanes, pues pensar en que José ahorrase de nuevo para comprar otra lancha, valía tanto como[1] dilatar su unión algunos años.

Mientras los amantes padecian de esta suerte, comenzó á correr por el pueblo, sin saber quién la soltara, la especie[2] de que la pérdida de la lancha no había sido fortuita, sino intencional. La circunstancia de haber marchado enteras las amarras se prestaba mucho á este supuesto; además, se había sabido también que el cable del ancla no estaba roto, sino cortado. Teresa fué una de las primeras en tener noticia de ello; y con la peculiar lucidez de la mujer y de los temperamentos fogosos, puso en seguida el dedo en la llaga:[3]

—¡Aquí anduvo la mano de la maestra!

En vano las comadres le insinuaban la idea de que José tenía en el lugar envidiosos de su fortuna: no quiso oírlas.

—Á mi hijo nadie le quiere mal; aunque haya alguno que le envidie, no es capaz de hacerle daño.

Y de esto no había quien la moviera. Irritósele la bilis[4] pensando en su enemiga, hasta un punto que causaba miedo: aquellos días primeros apenas osaba nadie

dirigirla la palabra; se puso flaca y amarilla; pasaba el tiempo gruñendo por casa como una fiera hambrienta.

Por fin una vez se plantó delante de José con los brazos en jarra,[1] y le dijo:

—¿Cuánto vamos á apostar á que cojo á la madre de tu novia por el pescuezo y se lo retuerzo?

José quedó aterrado.

—¿Por qué, madre?—preguntó con voz temblorosa.

—Porque sí; porque se me antoja... ¿Qué tienes que decir á esto?—repuso ella clavándole una mirada altiva.

El marinero bajó la cabeza sin contestar; conociendo bien á su madre, esperó á que se desahogara.

Viendo que él no replicaba, Teresa prosiguió, pasando de súbito de su aparente calma á una furiosa exaltación:

—Sí; un día la cojo por los pocos pelos que le quedan y la arrastro hasta la ribera... ¡Á esa bribona!... ¡Á esa puerca!... ¡Á esa sin vergüenza!...

Y siguió recorriendo fogosamente todo el catálogo de los dicterios. José permaneció mudo mientras duró la granizada; cuando se fué calmando, tornó á preguntar:

—¿Por qué, madre?

—¿Por qué? ¿Por qué? Porque ella ha sido, ¡esa infame! quien te hizo perder la lancha...

—¿Y cómo sabe V. eso?—preguntó el pescador con calma.

Teresa no lo sabía, ni mucho menos; pero la ira la hizo mantener en aquel momento que sí, que lo sabía á ciencia cierta, y no teniendo datos ni razones que ex-

poner en apoyo de su afirmación, las suplía con gritos, con insultos y amenazas.

José trató de disuadirla con empeño, representándola el grave pecado que era achacar á cualquiera persona una maldad semejante sin estar bien seguro de ello; pero la viuda no quiso escucharle; siguió cada vez con mayor cólera profiriendo amenazas. Entonces el marinero, atribulado, pensando en que si su madre llegaba á hacer lo que decía sus relaciones con Elisa quedaban rotas[1] para siempre, exclamó con angustia:

— ¡ Madre, por Dios le pido que no me pierda!

Fué tan dolorido el acento con que estas palabras se pronunciaron, que tocó el corazón de Teresa, el cual no era perverso sino cuando la ira le cegaba. Quedó un momento suspensa; murmuró aún algunas frases duras; finalmente se dejó ablandar, y prometió estarse quieta. Mas á los tres ó cuatro días, en un arranque de mal humor, rompió otra vez en amenazas contra su enemiga. Con esto José andaba triste y sobresaltado, esperando que la hora menos pensada se armase un escándalo que diera al traste con sus vacilantes relaciones.[2]

Teresa no sosegaba tampoco, queriendo á toda costa convertir en certidumbre la sospecha que la roía el corazón. Corría por las casas del pueblo interrogando á sus amigas, indagando con más destreza y habilidad que un experimentado agente de policía. Al cabo pudo averiguar que, días antes del suceso, la señá Isabel había tenido larga plática con Rufo el tonto á la orilla del mar. Este dato bañó de luz el tenebroso asunto; ya no había duda: la maestra era la inteligencia y Rufo el brazo que había cometido el delito. En-

tonces Teresa, para obtener la prueba de ello, se valió de un medio tan apropiado á su genio como oportuno en aquella sazón. Buscó inmediatamente á Rufo; hallólo en la ribera rodeado de unos cuantos marineros que se solazaban zumbándole, y dirigiéndose á él de improviso, lanzando rayos de cólera por los ojos, le dijo:

—¿Conque has sido tú, gran pícaro, el que soltó los cabos de la lancha de mi hijo, para que se perdiese? ¡Ahora mismo vas á morir á mis manos!

El tonto, sorprendido de este modo, cayó en el lazo; dió algunos pasos atrás, empalideció horriblemente, y plegando las manos comenzó á decir lleno de miedo:

—¡Peldóneme,[1] señá Telesa!... ¡Peldóneme, señá Telesa!...

Entonces ella se vendió á su vez; en lugar de seguir en aquel tono irritado y amenazador, dejó que apareciese en su rostro una sonrisa de triunfo.

—¡Hola! ¿Conque has sido tú de veras?... Pero de ti no ha salido esa picardía... eres demasiado tonto... Alguien te ha inducido á ello... ¿Te lo ha aconsejado la maestra, verdad?

El tonto, repuesto ya del susto y advertido por aquella sonrisa, tuvo la suficiente malicia[2] para no comprometer á la madre de su ídolo.

—No señola; no señola; fuí yo sólo...

Teresa trató con empeño de arrancarle el secreto; pero fué en vano. Rufo se mantuvo firme; los marineros, cansados de aquella brega, dijeron á una voz:

—Vamos, déjele ya, señá Teresa; no sacará nada en limpio.[3]

La viuda persuadida, hasta la evidencia[4] de que la

autora de su infortunio era la señá Isabel, y rabiosa y enfurecida por no habérselo podido sacar del cuerpo al idiota,[1] corrió derechamente á casa de aquélla.

Estaba á la puerta de la tienda cosiendo. Teresa la vió de lejos y gritó con acento jocoso:

— Hola, señá maestra, ¿está V. cosiendo? Allá voy[2] á ayudarla á V. un poquito.

No sabemos lo que la señá Isabel encontraría en aquella voz de extraordinario, ni lo que vería[3] en los ojos de la viuda al levantar la cabeza; lo cierto es que se alzó súbitamente de la silla, se retiró con ella y atrancó la puerta, todo con tal presteza, que por mucho que Teresa corrió, ya no pudo alcanzarla. Al verse defraudada, empujó con rabia la puerta gritando:

— ¿Te escondes, bribona? ¿te escondes? . . .

Pero al instante apareció en la ventana la señá Isabel diciendo con afectado sosiego:

— No me escondo, no; aquí me tienes.

— Baje V. un momento, señora — replicó Teresa, disfrazando con una sonrisa el tono amenazador que usaba.

— ¿Para qué me quieres abajo? ¿Para verte mejor esa cara de zorra vieja que te ha quedado?[4]

Este feroz insulto fué dicho con voz tranquila, casi amistosa. Teresa se irguió bravamente sintiendo el acicate,[5] y alzando los puños á la ventana, gritó:

— ¡Para arrancarte esa lengua de víbora y echársela á los perros, malvada!

Algunos curiosos rodeaban ya á la viuda; otros se asomaban á las ventanas de las casas vecinas esperando con visible satisfacción el espectáculo traji-cómico que se iniciaba. En Rodillero las pendencias entre muje-

res son frecuentísimas: es lógico, dado el genio vivo y exaltado de la mayoria de ellas: la mala educación, la ausencia de urbanidad propias de la plebe, no sólo hace que menudeen, sino que les da siempre un aspecto grosero y repugnante: además, en Rodillero, el asunto de las riñas tiene algo de tradicional y privativo; desde muy antiguo gozan fama en Asturias las disputas de las mujeres de este pueblo, y se sabe que no las hay más desvergonzadas y temibles cuando se desbocan. Así que, acostumbradas desde niñas á presenciarlas y á tomar parte muy á menudo, casi todas conocen bastante bien el arte de reñir y algunas llegan á ser consumadas maestras. Este mérito no queda oculto; se dice, por ejemplo: « Fulana riñe bien; Zutana se acalora demasiado pronto; Mengana da muchos gritos y no dice nada,» lo mismo que en Madrid se comentan y aquilatan las dotes de los oradores importantes. Había no hace mucho tiempo en Rodillero una persona que eclipsaba á todas las reñidoras del lugar y las derrotaba siempre que entraba en liza con ellas: era un hombre, aunque por sus gustos é inclinaciones tenía mucho de mujer; se llamaba, ó se llama, Pedro Regalado, pero nadie le conoce allí por otro nombre que por el de *el marica de D. Cándido.*[1] Teresa, aunque había reñido innumerables veces, no había llegado á adquirir, debido á su natural impetuoso, el grado de perfección que la retórica de las comadres exigía; aquel velar las injurias[2] para herir al adversario sin descubrirse;[3] aquel subir y bajar la voz con oportunidad, aquel manotear persuasivo, aquel sonreír irónico, aquel alejarse con majestad y venir de improviso con un nuevo insulto en la boca. La señá Isabel, por su posición un

tanto[1] más alta, descendía pocas veces á la palestra de la calle, pero era comúnmente temida á causa de su astucia y malevolencia.

— Á los perros hace tiempo que estás echada tú, pobrecilla — dijo contestando sin inmutarse á la terrible amenaza de Teresa.

— ¡ Eso quisieras tú ; echarme á los perros ! Para empezar me quieres echar á pedir limosna, quitándome el pan.

— ¿ Qué te he quitado yo ?

— La lancha nueva de mi hijo, ¡ infame !

— ¿ Que me he comido yo la lancha de tu hijo ? ¡ No creía tener tan buenas tragaderas ![2]

Los curiosos rieron. Teresa, encendida de furor, gritó :

— Ríete, pícara, ríete, que ya sabe todo el pueblo que has sido tú la que indujo al tonto del sacristán á cortar los cables de la lancha.

La maestra empalideció y quedó un instante suspensa ; pero repuesta en seguida, dijo :

— Lo que sabe todo el pueblo es que hace tiempo que debieras estar encerrada, por loca.

— Encerrada, pronto lo serás tú en la cárcel. ¡ Te he de llevar á la cárcel, ó poco he de poder !

— Calla, tonta, calla — dijo la maestra, dejando aparecer en su boca una sonrisa, — ¿ no ves que se están riendo de ti ?

— ¡ Á la cárcel ! ¡ á la cárcel ! — repitió la viuda con energía, y volviéndose á los circunstantes, preguntó enfáticamente : — ¿ Habéis visto nunca mujer más perversa ? . . . La madre murió de un golpe que le dió esta bribona con una sartén, bien lo sabéis . . . Echó

de casa á su hermano y le obligó á sentar plaza[1] ... Á su marido, que era un buen hombre, le dejó morir como á un perro, sin médico y sin medicinas, por no gastarse los cuartos ... que tampoco eran suyos; y si no mata á éste que ahora tiene, consiste en que es un calzonazos que no la estorba para nada ...

En este momento, D. Claudio, que estaba detrás de su mujer sin atreverse á intervenir en la contienda, sacó su faz deprimida y más fea aún por la indignación que reflejaba, diciendo:

—¡Cállese V., deslenguada; váyase V. de aquí ó doy parte[2] en seguida al señor alcalde!

Pero la maestra, que refrenaba con grandísimo trabajo la ira, halló medio de darla algún respiro sin comprometerse, y extendiendo el brazo, le pegó un soberbio mojicón de mano vuelta[3] en el rostro. El pobre pedagogo, al verse maltratado tan inopinadamente, sólo tuvo ánimo para exclamar, llevándose las manos á la parte dolorida:

—¡Mujer! tú, ¿por qué me castigas?

Teresa estaba tan embebida en la enumeración de las maldades de su enemiga, que no advirtió aquel chistoso incidente y siguió diciendo á la muchedumbre que la rodeaba:

—Ahora roba el dinero de su hija, lo que el difunto tenía de sus padres, y no la deja casarse por no soltar la tajada[4] ... ¡Antes dejará los dientes en ella! ...

La señá Isabel lanzó una carcajada estridente.

—¡Vamos, ya pareció aquello![5] ¿Estás ofendida porque no quiero que mi hija se case con el tuyo, verdad? ¿Quisieras echar las uñas á[6] mi dinero y diver-

tirte con él, verdad? Lámete, pobrecilla, lámete, que tienes el hocico untado.[1]

La viuda se puso encarnada como una brasa.

— Ni mi hijo ni yo necesitamos de tu dinero. Lo que queremos es que no nos robes. ¡Ladrona! ¡ladrona! . . . ¡ladrona! . . . ¡ladrona!

El furor de que estaba poseída le hizo repetir innumerables veces esta injuria, exponiéndose á ser procesada; en cambio la maestra procuraba insultarla á mansalva.[2]

— ¿Qué he de robarte yo, pobretona? Lo que tenías, ya no se acuerda nadie de cuándo te lo han robado . . .

— ¡Ladrona! ¡ladrona! ¡ladrona! — gritaba la viuda, á quien ahogaba el coraje.

— Calla, tonta, calla — decía la señá Isabel sin caérsele la sonrisa de los labios.[3] — Vamos, por lo visto,[4] tú quieres que te llame *aquello*[5] . . .

— ¡Has de parar en la horca, bribona!

— No te empeñes en que te llame *aquello*, porque no quiero. — Y volviéndose á los circunstantes, exclamaba con zumba:

— ¡Será terca esta mujer,[6] que se empeña en que le llame *aquello!* . . . ¡Y yo, no quiero! . . . ¡Y yo, no quiero! . . .

Al decir estas palabras abría los brazos con una resolución tan graciosa, que excitaba la risa de los presentes. El furor de Teresa había llegado al punto máximo; las injurias que salían de su boca eran cada vez más groseras y terribles.

Por grande que sea nuestro amor á la verdad, y vivo el deseo de representar fielmente una escena tan seña-

lada, el respeto que debemos á nuestros lectores nos obliga á hacer alto.[1] Su imaginación podrá suplir fácilmente lo que resta. La reyerta prosiguió encendida largo rato y en la misma disposición; esto es, la señá Isabel esgrimiendo[2] la burla y el sarcasmo, Teresa arrojándose á todos los denuestos imaginables: la acción acompañaba á la violencia de sus palabras; iba y venía con portentosa celeridad; daba vueltas en redondo como una peonza; sacudía los brazos en todas direcciones; desgarraba el pañuelo de la garganta que le sofocaba; todo su cuerpo se estremecía cual si estuviese sometido á una corriente magnética. Más de cien veces se alejó de aquel sitio, y otras tantas volvió para arrojar con voz enronquecida un nuevo insulto á la faz de su enemiga. Por último, rendida á tanto esfuerzo y casi perdida la voz, se alejó definitivamente. Los curiosos la perdieron de vista entre las revueltas de la calle. La señá Isabel, victoriosa, le gritó aún desde la ventana:

—¡Anda, anda; vete á casa y toma tila y azahar; no sea cosa que te dé la perlesía, y revientes![3]

Teresa padecía, en efecto, del corazón, y solía resentirse cuando experimentaba algún disgusto. En cuanto llegó á casa cayó en un accidente tan grave, que fué necesario llamar apresuradamente al cirujano del lugar.

VIII

Cuando á la tarde llegó José de la mar y se enteró de lo acaecido, experimentó el más fiero dolor de su vida. No pudo medirlo bien, sin embargo, hasta que su

madre salió del accidente; los cuidados que exigia y la zozobra que inspiraba le hacían olvidar en cierto modo su propia desdicha. Mas al ponerse buena á los dos ó tres días, sintió tan viva y tan cruel la herida de su alma, que estuvo á punto de adolecer. No salió de sus labios, á pesar de esto, una palabra de recriminación; enterró su dolor en el fondo del pecho y siguió ejecutando la tarea cotidiana con el mismo sosiego aparente. Pero al llegar de la mar por las tardes, en vez de ir á la tienda de la maestra ó de pasar un rato en la taberna con sus amigos como antes, se metía en casa, así que despachaba los negocios del pescado, y no volvía á salir hasta el siguiente día á la hora de embarcarse.

Esta resignación mortificaba aún más á Teresa que una reyerta cada hora: andaba inquieta y avergonzada: su corazón de madre padecía al ver el dolor mudo y grave de su hijo: aunque no se hubiese apagado ni mucho menos en su alma la hoguera de la cólera, y desease frenéticamente tomar venganza acabada de la señá Isabel, empezaba á sentir algo parecido al remordimiento. Pero no fué parte esto á impedir que demandase judicialmente[1] al sacristán reclamándole los daños causados por su hijo Rufo, el cual por su inocencia no era responsable ante la ley. Y como el hecho estaba bien probado, el juez de Sarrió condenó al cabo al sacristán á encerrar en casa al tonto y á resarcir el valor de la lancha á José. Lo primero fué ejecutado al punto; mas á lo segundo no era fácil darle cumplido efecto, porque el sacristán vivía de los escasos emolumentos que el cura le pagaba, y no se le conocían más bienes de fortuna:[2] cuando el escribano fué á embar-

garle la hacienda vióse necesitado á tomar los muebles, los enseres de cocina y las ropas de cama, todo lo cual, viejo y estropeado, produjo poquísimo dinero. Mas la sacristana debía de estimarlo como si fuese de oro y marfil, á juzgar por el llanto y los suspiros que le costó desprenderse de ello. Tenía esta mujer opinión de bruja en el pueblo; las madres la miraban con terror y ponían gran cuidado en que no besara á sus pequeños; los hombres la consultaban algunas veces cuando hacían un viaje largo para saber su resultado. Ella, en vez de trabajar por deshacer esta opinión, la fomentaba con su conducta, á semejanza de lo que en otro tiempo hacían algunas desdichadas que la Inquisición mandaba á la hoguera: la vanidad femenina puede llegar á tales extravíos. Decía la buenaventura por medio de las cartas ó las rayas de la mano; sacaba el maleficio al que no podía usar del matrimonio;[1] propinaba untos y polvos para ser querido de la persona deseada, y se daba aire de suficiencia y aparato de misterio que excitaba grandemente la fantasía de los pobres pescadores.

Al ver que le arrebataban de casa sus muebles, prorrumpió en maldiciones tan espantosas contra Teresa y su hijo, que consiguió horrorizar á los curiosos, que como sucede siempre en tales casos, habían seguido al escribano y al alguacil.

—¡Permita Dios que esa bribona pida limosna por las calles y la ahorquen después por ladrona! ¡Permita Dios que se le haga veneno lo que coma! ¡Permita Dios que su hijo vaya un día á la mar y no vuelva!

Mientras los ministros de la justicia desempeñaron su tarea, no cesó de invocar al cielo y al infierno contra

sus enemigos. Los vecinos que se hallaban presentes marcharon aterrados.

— Por todo lo que tiene D. Anacleto — decía un marinero viejo á los que iban con él — no quisiera estar ahora en el pellejo de José el de la viuda.[1] Hay que temer las maldiciones de esa mujer.

— No será tanto[2] — repuso otro más joven y más despreocupado.

— Te digo que sí: tú eres mozo y no puedes acordarte, pero aquí están Casimiro y Juan, que bien saben lo que á mí me ha pasado con ella hace ya algunos años... Iba yo una tarde á la ribera para salir á la merluza, cuando me llamó para pedirme que llevase conmigo á su Rufo y le hiciese rapaz de la lancha. Yo me negué á ello, claro está, porque ese bobo nunca ha servido para nada. Se puso entonces como una perra rabiosa contra mí, y me llenó de insultos y maldiciones. Yo sin hacer caso seguí mi camino y entré á bordo: llegamos á la playa de la merluza á eso de las nueve[3] y tuvimos los aparejos echados hasta el amanecer. ¿Querrás creer que no aferré más de tres merluzas? Las demás lanchas vinieron con cada ochenta, ciento y hasta la hubo de ciento treinta.[4] Al dia siguiente me sucedió poco más ó menos lo mismo, y al otro igual,[5] y al otro igual... En fin, muchacho, que no tuve más remedio que ir á su casa y pedirle por Dios que me levantase la maldición...

Los marineros viejos apoyaron lo que su compañero afirmaba. Cuando los demás vecinos tuvieron noticia de las tremendas maldiciones proferidas por la mujer del sacristán, también compadecieron sinceramente á José. La misma Teresa, al saberlo, se sintió atemori-

zada, por más que la soberbia le hiciese ocultar el miedo.

Á la hora de comer, la señá Isabel, que lo había aprendido en la calle, se lo notició á su hija con extremado deleite.

—¿No sabes una cosa,[1] Elisa?

—¿Qué?

—Que hoy fueron á embargar los muebles á Eugenia la sacristana por lo que hizo su hijo Rufo con la lancha de José... ¡Pero anda, que no les arriendo la ganancia[2] ni á éste ni á su madre!... Las maldiciones que aquella mujer les echó no son para dichas[3]... Creo que daban miedo.[4]

Elisa, cuya alma impresionable y supersticiosa conocía bien la maestra, se puso pálida.

—¡Fueron espantosas, según cuentan!—prosiguió la vieja relamiéndose interiormente.[5]—Que había de verles pidiendo limosna por las calles...que ojalá José necesitase robar para comer y le viese después colgado de una horca, ó que saliese un día á la mar y no volviese...

Las manos de Elisa temblaban al llevar la cuchara á la boca, mientras su madre, con refinada crueldad, repetia una por una las atrocidades que por la mañana habia proferido la sacristana. Al fin, algunas lágrimas salieron rodando de sus ojos hermosos. La maestra, al verlas, se indignó terriblemente.

—¿Por qué lloras, mentecata? ¿Habrá en el mundo muchacha más bobalicona?... ¡Aguarda un poco, que yo te daré motivo para llorar!

Y levantándose de la silla, la aplicó un par de sober-

bias bofetadas, que enrojecieron las mejillas de la cándida doncella.

Mientras tales sucesos acaecían, estaba feneciendo en Rodillero la costera del bonito; por mejor decir, había terminado enteramente. Corrían los postreros días de Octubre; el tiempo estaba sereno; la mar se rizaba levemente en toda su extensión al paso de las brisas frías del otoño; el cielo, á la caída de la tarde, se presentaba diáfano y pálido; algunas nubes de color violeta permanecían suspendidas en el horizonte; los cabos de la costa parecían más cercanos por la pureza del ambiente; cuando las ráfagas de la brisa eran más vivas corrían por la superficie del mar fuertes temblores de frío, cual si al monstruo se le pusiese carne de gallina.[1]

Había llegado la época propicia para la pesca de la sardina, más descansada y de menos peligro que la del bonito. Desgraciadamente, aquel año se presentó muy poca en la costa, las lanchas salían por mañana y tarde y regresaban la mayor parte de los días sin traer sobre los paneles el valor de la raba[2] que habían echado al agua como cebo. ¡Qué distinto aquel año del anterior, en que se pescaba en una hora lo bastante para tornarse á casa satisfechos; en que las gaviotas se cernían en bandadas sobre las barcas para recoger las migajas del botín; en que los muchachos, encaramados sobre las peñas, veían brillar de lejos la sardina en el fondo de las lanchas como montones enormes de lingotes de plata! Y no habiendo sardina, tampoco tenían cebo para salir al congrio y la merluza, ni pescar cerca de la costa la robaliza, el sollo, el salmonete y otros peces exquisitos. El hambre iba, pues, á presentarse muy

pronto en Rodillero, porque los pescadores viven ordinariamente para el día, sin acordarse del siguiente. Algunos de ellos, no obstante, se defendían de la miseria persistiendo en salir al bonito, puesto que[1] éste andaba escaso también, y se corría ya, por lo avanzado de la estación, grave riesgo en pescarlo: la mar, en esta época, se alborota presto; el viento, á veces, también cae[2] de un modo repentino, y las lanchas necesitan alejarse mucho para hallar aquel pescado. José era uno de estos marineros temerarios; pero vencido al fin de las amonestaciones de los viejos y de su propia experiencia, que también se lo mandaba, determinó de suspender las salidas al bonito y dedicarse á la sardina, aunque con poquísimas esperanzas de obtener buen resultado.

Antes de emprender esta pesca se fué una mañana por tierra á Sarrió con el objeto de comprar raba. Había amanecido un día sereno: el mar presentaba un color lechoso: el sol se mantuvo largo rato envuelto en una leve gasa blanca; los cabos en vapor trasparente y azulado. Sobre la llanura del mar, el cielo aparecía estriado de nubes matizadas de violeta y rosa. Á las diez de la mañana el sol rompió su envoltura,[3] disipáronse las nubes, y comenzó á ventar fresco del N. E. Á la una de la tarde la brisa se fué calmando, y aparecieron por la parte de tierra algunas nubecillas blancas como copos de lana: se indicó el contraste:[4] á la media hora ya se había declarado. El viento del Oeste consiguió la victoria sobre su enemigo, y comenzó á soplar reciamente, pero sin inspirar cuidado. Sin embargo, su fuerza fué aumentando poco á poco, de suerte que á las tres soplaba ya huracanado. Los marineros que

estaban en el pueblo habían acudido todos á la ribera. Á partir de esta hora,[1] fué aumentando por momentos la fuerza del vendaval. Comenzó á sentirse en el pueblo la agitación del miedo: un rumor sordo y confuso producido por las idas y venidas de la gente, por las preguntas que los vecinos se dirigían unos á otros. Las mujeres dejaban las ocupaciones de la casa y salían á las puertas y á las ventanas, y se miraban asustadas, y se interrogaban con los ojos y con la lengua.

—¿Han llegado las lanchas?

—¿Están las lanchas fuera?

Y unas después de otras, las que tenían á los suyos en el mar, enderezaron sus pasos hacia la ribera, formando grupos y comunicándose sus temores. Mas antes de que pudiesen llegar allá, el viento se desató violento é iracundo, como pocas veces se había visto: en pocos minutos se convirtió en un terrible y pavoroso huracán: al cruzar por el estrecho barranco de Rodillero, con ruido infernal, batió furiosamente las puertas de las casas, arrebató algunas redes que se hallaban tendidas en las ventanas, y arrojó remolinos de inmundicia á los ojos de los vecinos. Las mujeres, embargadas por el miedo, suspendieron toda conversación y corrieron desaladas[2] á la playa: los demás habitantes, hombres, mujeres y niños, que no tenían ningún pariente en la mar, dejaron también sus casas, y las siguieron; por la calle no se oía más que este grito: «¡Las lanchas! ¡las lanchas!»

Al desembocar aquella muchedumbre en la ribera, el mar ofrecía un espectáculo hermoso, más que imponente. Los vientos repentinos no traen consigo gran revolución en las aguas por el momento, sino una ma-

rejada viva y superficial. Así que la vasta llanura sólo estaba fuertemente fruncida; brillaban en toda su extensión infinitos puntos blancos, surgiendo y desapareciendo alternativamente á modo de mágico chisporroteo. Pero los centenares de ojos clavados en el horizonte con ansiedad, no vieron señal ninguna de barco. Entonces una voz gritó: — «¡Á San Esteban!... ¡á San Esteban!» — Todos dejaron la ribera para subir á aquel monte, que señoreaba una extensión inmensa de agua. La mayoría se fué á buscar corriendo el camino que por detrás del pueblo conducía á él; mas los niños y las pobres mujeres que tenían á sus esposos y hermanos en la mar, se pusieron á escalarlo á pico; la impaciencia, el terror, el ansia, les daba fuerza para trepar por las rocas puntiagudas y la maleza.

Cuando llegaron á la cima y tendieron la vista por la gran planicie del océano, vieron en los confines del horizonte tres ó cuatro puntos blancos; eran las lanchas. Después fueron apareciendo sucesivamente otros varios, mostrándose unos y otros cada vez con más precisión.

— Vienen todas en vuelta de[1] tierra, con el borriquete de proa[2] solamente — dijo uno de los marineros que acababan de llegar.

— En vuelta de tierra, sí; pero á buscar pronto el abrigo de la costa: tienen la proa puesta á Peñascosa — repuso otro.

El grupo de los espectadores colocado en la cima del monte, se fué engrosando rápidamente con los que llegaban á toda prisa. El viento hacía tremolar vivamente los pañuelos de las mujeres, y obligaba á los hombres que gastaban sombrero á tenerlo sujeto con la

mano. Reinaba silencio ansioso en aquel puñado de seres humanos: el huracán zumbaba con fuerza en los oídos, hasta aturdirlos y ensordecerlos: todos los ojos estaban clavados en aquellos puntitos blancos que parecían inmóviles allá en el horizonte. De vez en cuando, los marineros se comunicaban rápidamente alguna observación.

— La salsa[1] les debe de incomodar.

— Phs[2] . . . eso importa poco: por ahora, la mar no les hace mayor daño. Si consiguen abrigarse, no hay cuidado.

— Necesitan orzar mucho.

— Claro; todo lo que dé el viento . . .; y aun así, no sé si podrán meterse detrás del cabo.

Las lanchas, al fin, se fueron ocultando una en pos de otra donde el marinero decía.

El grupo respiró. Sin embargo, aquel consuelo se fué trocando poco á poco en angustia á medida que el tiempo avanzaba y los barcos no parecían sobre la punta de tierra más próxima á Rodillero, denominada el Cuerno.

Trascurrió media hora; el grupo de los vecinos tenía los ojos fijos en este cabo con expresión de anhelo: el viento seguía cada vez más soberbio y embravecido.

— Mucho tardan — dijo un marinero al oído de otro.

— Se habrán metido quizá en la concha[3] de Peñascosa — contestó éste.

— Ó vendrán ciñendo la tierra sin soltarla.

Tenía razón el primero. Después de aguardar largo rato, apareció por el Cuerno una lancha con el borriquete solamente y á medio izar.[4]

—¡Es la de Nicolás de la Tejera![1] —dijeron á un tiempo varias voces.

—¡Alabado sea Dios!—¡Bendita sea la Virgen Santísima!—¡El Santo Cristo hermoso los ha salvado!—dijeron casi á un tiempo las esposas y las madres de los que la tripulaban.

Y bajaron corriendo á la ribera para esperarlos.

Al poco rato, apareció otra.

—¡Es la de Manuel de Dorotea!—exclamaron en seguida en el grupo.

Se escucharon las mismas bendiciones y gritos de alegría, y otro golpe de mujeres y niños se destacó corriendo á la playa.

Luego vino otra, y luego otra, y así sucesivamente fueron apareciendo unas tras otras las lanchas. El grupo del monte de San Esteban iba mermando poco á poco á medida que las barcas entraban en la ensenada de Rodillero. Pronto quedó reducido á un puñado de personas. Faltaba una sola lancha. En la ribera, se sabía ya que aquella lancha no había de llegar, porque había zozobrado; pero nadie osaba subir á San Esteban á noticiarlo. Las pobres mujeres que allí estaban, esperaban con sus pequeñuelos de la mano, silenciosas, inmóviles, presintiendo su desgracia, y haciendo esfuerzos por alejar del pensamiento la terrible idea.

El sol se ocultaba ya entre rojizos resplandores: el viento aun persistía en soplar furiosamente: las aguas del océano dejaban de fruncirse y comenzaban á hincharse con soberbia. Las esposas y madres seguían con los ojos clavados en el mar esperando siempre ver aparecer los suyos: nadie se decía una palabra ni de temor ni de consuelo; mas, sin advertirlo ellas mismas,

alguna lágrimas saltaban á los ojos: el viento las secaba prontamente.

Mientras esto acaecía en Rodillero, José caminaba apresuradamente la vuelta de él por la carretera de Sarrió. Como marino experimentado, comprendió á las primeras señales de contraste que iba á caer un viento peligroso. Al observar la violencia inusitada de las ráfagas, se dijo, lleno de tristeza: — « Es imposible que hoy no suceda una desgracia en Rodillero.» — Y apretó cuanto pudo el paso. De vez en cuando se detenía algunos instantes para subir á alguna eminencia del camino y escrutar atentamente los horizontes de la mar en busca de las lanchas. Cuando el huracán llegó á su mayor poder, no le fué dado resistir la impaciencia: dejó el barril de raba, que había comprado, en manos de otro caminante que halló por casualidad, y se dió á correr como un gamo hasta perder el aliento.

Cuando alcanzó las primeras casas del pueblo, era ya muy cerca del oscurecer. Un grupo de chicos estaba jugando á los bolos en las afueras: al pasar por delante, uno de ellos le dijo:

— José; la lancha de Tomás se perdió.

El marinero detuvo el paso, y preguntó visiblemente conmovido:

— ¿Dónde iba mi cuñado Nicasio?

El muchacho bajó la cabeza sin contestar, asustado ya y arrepentido de habérselo dicho.

José se puso terriblemente pálido, quitóse la boina y comenzó á mesarse los cabellos, dejando escapar palabras de dolor y gemidos. Siguió caminando hacia el pueblo, y entró en él escoltado por el grupo de chicos y por otros muchos que se les fueron agregando. —

«Ahí va José; ahí va José de la viuda:» — se decían los vecinos acercándose á las puertas y ventanas para verle pasar descolorido y con la boína en la mano. Al cruzar por delante de una taberna, salieron de ella tres ó cuatro voces llamándole; y otros tantos marineros acudieron á detenerle, y le hicieron entrar: Bernardo era uno de ellos; otro el Corsario.

— Acaban de decirme que se perdió la lancha de Tomás... ¿No se salvó ninguno? — preguntó temblándole la voz, al poner el pie en la taberna.

Ninguno de los marineros esparcidos por ella, le contestó. Después de algunos instantes de silencio, uno le dijo:

— Vamos, José; toma un vaso de vino, y serénate: todos estamos sujetos á lo mismo.

José se dejó caer sentado sobre el banco próximo al mostrador, y metió la cabeza entre las manos sin hacer caso del vaso que su compañero le puso delante. Al cabo de un rato, sin embargo, alargó la mano para cogerlo y bebió todo el vino con avidez.

— ¡Qué se va á hacer! ¡Vaya todo por Dios![1] — dijo al colocarlo otra vez sobre el mostrador: y limpiándose con la boína algunas lágrimas que le rodaban por el rostro, preguntó ya con voz entera:

— ¿Y cómo fué eso?

— Pues nada, muchacho, se fueron á pique porque quisieron — le contestó uno. — Cuando veníamos todos con el borriquete medio relingado y con muchísimo ojo,[2] y que no nos llegaba la camisa al cuerpo,[3] vemos que Tomás iza el trinquete en el palo del medio... Me parece que no había acabado de relingar cuando ¡zas! dió vuelta[4] la lancha...

— ¿No quedó flotando alguno? — preguntó Bernardo.

— Sí; vimos tres ó cuatro.

— ¿Y por qué no los recogisteis?

— Porque pasábamos muy lejos de ellos . . . Detrás de nosotros y bien á barlovento venía Joaquín de la Mota . . . Pensábamos que él los recogería.

— ¡Pensabais! ¡pensabais! — exclamó Bernardo indignado. — ¡Lo que yo pienso es que debierais ir entre guardias civiles á la cárcel así que saltasteis en la ribera!

— ¿Por qué, morral,[1] por qué? — preguntó el otro lleno de ira. — ¿Qué íbamos á hacer nosotros, pasando más de un tiro de carabina lejos de ellos? ¿Querías que por salvarlos á ellos nos ahogáramos todos?

— ¡Ahogaros! ¡ahogaros! . . . ¡La lástima fué esa![2] . . . ¿Y por qué no arriasteis de plan[3] la vela y no os acercasteis bogando?

— ¡Cállate, burro, cállate! ¿Crees tú que estaba la mar para que hiciéramos dulces con ella?[4]

— La mar estaba bella . . . un poco de salsa y nada más.

— ¿Qué sabes tú lo que pasaba en la mar si estabas en tierra rascándote la barriga?[5]

— La mar estaba bella, te digo . . . Y además, en último resultado, ¿por qué no disteis fondo[6] y no aguardasteis á que ellos se fueran acercando á vosotros?

Mientras Bernardo y el otro marinero disputaban, José permanecía silencioso, teniendo la cabeza entre las manos en actitud de profundo abatimiento. Pensaba que su hermana quedaba con seis niños, el mayor

de once años, sin más amparo que la capa del cielo: y por más que sus hermanas jamás habían sido buenas para él y le habían ocasionado muchos pesares, todavía les dedicaba en su corazón un cariño inmenso. La tabernera, gorda y linfática, le miraba con lástima y hacía esfuerzos por consolarle, presentándole de vez en cuando el vaso lleno de vino: él alargaba el brazo distraídamente para cogerlo y lo bebía hasta el tope,[1] sin darse cuenta cabal de lo que hacía.

Cuando más encendida estaba la disputa entre Bernardo y su compañero, hé aquí que se oyen fuertes gritos en la calle, y casi en el mismo instante entra en la taberna con violencia la hermana de nuestro marinero, la que acababa de quedar viuda, suelto el cabello, el rostro demudado y rodeada de sus hijos. Se abalanza á José y se arroja en sus brazos, rompiendo en agudos gemidos, que dejan silenciosos y graves á todos los marineros. Aquél la recibe también llorando. Cuando se separan, la mujer recoge sus niños, y, empujándolos hacia José, les dice, con cierta expresión teatral que repugna á los circunstantes, bien enterados de lo mucho que aquél había sufrido por su causa:

— Hijos míos, ya no tenéis quien os mantenga; pedid de rodillas á vuestro tío que sea vuestro padre; él, que es tan bueno, os amparará.

El noble marinero no advierte, como los demás, la hipocresía de su hermana; abraza á los niños y les besa diciendo:

— No tengáis cuidado, pobrecitos; mientras yo tenga un pedazo de pan, será vuestro y de vuestra madre.

Después se limpia las lágrimas y dice á su hermana:

— Vaya, llévalos á casa, que ya es noche.

Así que la mujer y los chicos salieron de la taberna, se enredó de nuevo la disputa sobre el percance[1] de la tarde: poco á poco todos los marineros fueron tomando parte en ella, hasta no entenderse nadie.

José permanecía silencioso al lado del mostrador, apurando de vez en cuando el vaso de vino que la tabernera le presentaba. Al fin, tanto fué lo que bebió, sin advertirlo, que perdió la cabeza y fué preciso trasportarlo á casa, en completo estado de embriaguez.

IX

Recogió, en efecto, á la viuda y sus hijos en casa y los mantuvo todo lo bien que[2] le consentían sus escasos recursos. Pero éstos, en vez de aumentar, fueron disminuyendo: la costera de la sardina fué desdichada hasta el fin; no hubo apenas congrio ni merluza: cuando llegó la del besugo, por los meses de Diciembre y Enero, José estaba empeñado en más de mil reales, y aun le faltaba pagar cuatro barriles de raba, que ascendían á una respetable cantidad. Viéndose perseguido por los acreedores, se deshizo de su lancha, la cual por ser vieja y venderse con prisa, le valió poco dinero. Una vez sin lancha, no tuvo más remedio que entrar de simple compañero en otra, ganando como los demás, una soldada, que aquel año era cortísima.

Agregábase á estas calamidades la de no tener sosiego en casa. Su madre no sufría con paciencia los reveses de la fortuna y se rebelaba contra ella, armando por el más liviano motivo una batahola, que se oía de todos los rincones del pueblo. Dentro de casa, su hija,

sus nietos y el mismo José, cuando llegaba de la mar, eran víctimas de aquella cólera que se le había derramado por el cuerpo y que la ahogaba. Por otra parte, la hermana casada no veía con buenos ojos que la viuda y sus hijos se estuviesen comiendo todo lo que había en casa de su madre y la dejasen arruinada, cuando ella no había sacado ni un mal jergón[1] (eran sus palabras) ; y no dejaba de echárselo en cara siempre que podía, y de ahí se originaban pendencias repugnantes que convertían la vivienda en un verdadero infierno.

Para salir de él temporalmente, y no morirse de tristeza, nuestro desgraciado marinero asistía de vez en cuando á la taberna y se pasaba allí algunas horas charlando y bebiendo con sus compañeros. Poco á poco el vicio de la bebida, que tanto había aborrecido, se fué apoderando de él, y si no le dominó por entero como á otros, haciéndole olvidar sus obligaciones, todavía fué lo bastante para que en el pueblo se dijese que « estaba convertido en un borracho.» La señá Isabel se daba prisa á propalar esta especie entre las comadres.

La miseria, el trabajo, la discordia doméstica, no serían poderosos á abatir el ánimo del pescador si á ellas no se añadiese la soledad del corazón, que es el desengaño. Educado en la desgracia, padeciendo desde que nació todos los rigores de la suerte, luchando con la ferocidad de la mar y con los caracteres no menos feroces de su madre y hermanas, poco le importaría[2] un latigazo más de la fortuna si su vida no hubiera sido iluminada un instante por el sol de la dicha. Pero había tropezado con el amor en su monótona existencia, y había tropezado al tiempo mismo en que alcanzaba también el bienestar material. De pronto, bien-

estar y amor se habían huído: apagóse el rayo de luz: quedó sumido en las tinieblas de la miseria y la soledad. Y si es cierto, como afirma el poeta, que no existe mayor dolor que recordar el tiempo feliz en la desgracia,[1] no es maravilla que el pobre José buscase un lenitivo al suyo y el olvido momentáneo de sus penas en la ficticia alegría que el vino comunica.

Desde la reyerta de su madre con la señá Isabel no había vuelto á hablar con Elisa, ni la había visto sino de lejos; en cuanto divisaba su figura (y era pocas veces porque se pasaba el día entero en la mar), se alejaba corriendo ó se mezclaba en un grupo para no tropezar con ella, ó buscaba asilo en la taberna inmediata. Al principio esto fué por vergüenza y miedo: temía que Elisa estuviese ofendida y no le quisiera saludar. Más adelante[2] la maledicencia, que en tales casos nunca deja de andar suelta,[3] trajo á sus oídos la noticia de que la joven estaba ya inclinada á despreciarle, que su madre había logrado persuadirla á ello, y que pronto se casaría con un piloto de Sarrió. Entonces por dignidad evitó cuidadosamente su encuentro. Los contratiempos que después padeció ayudaron también mucho á alejarle de ella: pensaba, y no le faltaba razón, que un hombre arruinado y con tantas obligaciones como él tenía, no era partido para ninguna muchacha, y menos para una tan codiciada como la hija de la maestra.

Así estaban las cosas cuando un día en que por falta de viento no salieron á la mar, le propuso su madre ir á Peñascosa, distante de Rodillero poco más de media legua: tenía allí Teresa una hermana que le había ofrecido patatas de su huerta y algunas otras legumbres, que en el estado de pobreza en que se hallaban, eran un

socorro muy aceptable. Decidieron ir por la tarde y tornar al oscurecer, para que José no pasase en medio del día, cargado, por el pueblo. Aunque había camino real para ir á Peñascosa, la gente de este pueblo y la de Rodillero acostumbraba servirse, cuando no llevaban carro ó caballería, de una trocha abierta á orillas de la mar; ésta fué la que siguieron madre é hijo cuando ya el sol declinaba.

Era un día trasparente y frío del mes de Febrero; el mar ofrecía un color azul oscuro. Como la vereda no consentía que fuesen pareados,[1] la madre caminaba delante y el hijo la seguía: marchaban silenciosos y tristes: hacía tiempo que la alegría había huido de sus corazones. Cuando se hallaban á medio camino próximamente, en un paraje en que la trocha dejaba las peñas de la costa y entraba por un vasto y alegre campo, vieron á lo lejos otras dos personas que hacia ellos venían. Teresa no fijó la atención en ellas; pero José. por su costumbre de explorar largas distancias, no tardó en descubrir que aquellas dos personas eran la señá Isabel y su hija: dióle un salto el corazón, pensando en que era forzoso tropezarse. ¡Qué iba á pasar allí! No se atrevió á decir nada á su madre y la dejó caminar distraída, con los ojos bajos; mas al fin ésta levantó la cabeza, y fijándose en las dos figuras lejanas, se volvió hacia él preguntando:

—Oyes, José, ¿aquellas dos mujeres no te parece que son la señá Isabel y Elisa?

—Creo que sí—respondió el marinero sordamente.

—¡Ah!—exclamó Teresa con feroz regocijo, y apretó un poco el paso sin pronunciar palabra, temien-

do, sin duda, que el hijo tratase de estorbar el proyecto que había nacido súbitamente en su imaginación.

José la siguió con el corazón angustiado, sin osar decirle nada. No obstante, después que hubieron caminado algunos pasos, pudo más el temor de una escena violenta y escandalosa que el respeto filial, y se aventuró á decir severamente:

— Madre, haga el favor, por Dios, de no comprometerse ni comprometerme.

Pero Teresa siguió caminando sin contestarle, como si quisiera evitar razonamientos.

Un poco más allá, tornó á decirle aún con más severidad:

— ¡ Mire bien lo que va á hacer, madre!

El mismo silencio por parte de Teresa. En esto[1] se habían acercado ya bastante los que iban y los que venían de Peñascosa. Cuando estuvieron á un tiro de piedra, próximamente, la señá Isabel detuvo el paso y vaciló un instante entre seguir ó retroceder, porque había advertido la resolución nada pacífica con que Teresa caminaba hacia ella. Por fin, adoptó el término medio de estarse quieta. Teresa avanzó rápidamente hacia ella; pero al hallarse á una distancia de veinte ó treinta pasos, se detuvo también, y poniendo los brazos en jarras, comenzó á preguntar á su enemiga en el tono sarcástico que la ira le hacía siempre adoptar:

— ¡ Hola, señora! . . . ¿ Cómo está V., señora? . . . ¿ Está V. buena? . . . ¿ El esposo bueno también? . . . Hacía tiempo que no tenía el gusto de verla . . .

— ¡ José, ten cuidado con tu madre, que está loca! — gritó la señá Isabel con el semblante demudado.

—¡Ah, señora! ¿Conque después de haberle echado á pedir limosna y haberse reído de él, le pide V. todavía que la socorra? — Y cambiando repentinamente la expresión irónica de su rostro por otra iracunda y feroz, salvó como un tigre la distancia que la separaba de su enemiga, y se arrojó sobre ella gritando: —¡Tú me has vuelto loca, bribona!... ¡Pero ahora me las vas á pagar todas![1]

La lucha fué tan rabiosa como repugnante. La viuda, más fuerte y más nerviosa, consiguió en seguida arrojar al suelo á la señá Isabel; pero ésta, apelando á todos los medios de defensa, arrancó los pendientes á su enemiga, rajándole las orejas y haciéndole sangrar por ellas copiosamente.

José de un lado y Elisa del otro, se habían precipitado á separar á sus madres, y se esforzaban inútilmente por conseguirlo. Elisa tenía el rostro bañado de lágrimas; José estaba pálido y conmovido. Sus manos en uno de los lances de la faena,[2] se encontraron casualmente; y por un movimiento simultáneo, alzaron ambos la cabeza; se miraron con amor, y se las estrecharon tiernamente.

Al fin José, cogiendo á su madre por medio del cuerpo, la levantó en el aire y fué á depositarla algunos pasos lejos: Elisa ayudó á levantarse á la suya. Unos y otros se apartaron siguiendo su camino. Las madres iban delante murmurando sin cesar injurias: los hijos volvían á menudo la cabeza para mirarse, hasta que se perdieron enteramente de vista.

X

Don Fernando, de la gran casa de Meira, se paseaba una noche, dos meses después del suceso que acabamos de referir, por el vasto salón feudal de su casa solariega. Alguien hubiera echado menos en aquel instante la artística lámpara de bronce, en consonancia con la majestuosa amplitud de la cuadra, ó los primorosos candelabros de plata de un período más reciente; porque el pavimento no estaba llano, liso y extendido como en los siglos anteriores; ofrecía aquí y allá algunos agujeros, que aunque labrados por la planta nobilísima de los señores de Meira, y en este supuesto muy dignos de veneración, no dejaban de ser enemigos declarados de la integridad y salud de todas las piernas, lo mismo hidalgas que plebeyas. Pero D. Fernando los conocía muy bien, y los evitaba sin verlos, caminando con paso rápido de un cabo á otro de la estancia, en medio de las tinieblas.

Sus pasos retumbaban huecos y profundos en el vetusto caserón; mas los ratones, habituados desde muy antiguo[1] á escucharlos, no mostraban temor alguno y persistían tranquilamente en su obra devastadora, rompiendo el silencio de la noche con un leve y continuado crugido; los murciélagos, con menos temor aún, volaban en danza fantástica sobre la cabeza del anciano con sordo y medroso zumbido.

En aquel momento, D. Fernando se hubiera metamorfoseado de buena gana en ratón, y acaso acaso,[2] en murciélago. Por muy triste que fuese roer en la ma-

dera sepultado en un tétrico agujero, ó yacer aletargado durante el día sobre la cornisa de una puerta, para volar únicamente en las lúgubres horas de la noche, ¿lo era menos, por ventura, verse privado de salir á la luz del sol y caminar al aire libre después de conocer las dulzuras de uno y otro? Pues esto, ni más ni menos, era lo que le acaecía al noble vástago de la casa de Meira, hacía ya cerca de un mes. ¿Y todo por qué? Por una cosa tan sencilla y corriente, como no tener camisa.

Hacía ya bastante tiempo que D. Fernando sólo tenía una; pero con ella se daba traza para ir tirando;[1] cuando estaba sucia la lavaba con sus propias manos, y la tendía en un patinejo[2] que había detrás de la casa, y después que se secaba, bien aplanchada con las manos, se la ponía. Mas sucedió que una mañana, estando la camisa tendida al sol, y el señor de Meira esperando en su mansión que se secase, acertó á entrar en el patio, por una de sus múltiples brechas, el asno de un vecino; el señor de Meira le vió acercarse á la camisa, sin sospechar nada malo; le vió llegar el hocico á ella, y todavía no comprendió sus planes; sólo al contemplarla entre los dientes del pollino se hizo cargo de su imprevisión, y sintió el corazón desgarrado; y la camisa también. Desde entonces D. Fernando no puso más los pies en la calle á las horas del día; repugnaba mucho, y no sin razón, á sus altos sentimientos feudales, presentarse sin una prenda[3] tan indispensable ante los hijos de aquellos antiguos villanos, sobre quienes sus antepasados ejercían el derecho de pernada[4] y otros privilegios tan despóticos, aunque menos ominosos.

Entre los hijos de aquellos villanos corría como muy

cierta la voz de que D. Fernando estaba pasando « las de Caín.»[1] Y aunque el hambre se cernía como águila rapaz sobre la cabeza de casi todos los vecinos de Rodillero, no faltaban corazones compasivos que procuraban socorrer al noble caballero sin ofender su extraordinaria y delicadísima susceptibilidad. El que más se distinguía en esta generosa tarea era nuestro José, el cual apelaba á mil ardides y embustes para obligar al señor de Meira á que aceptase sus auxilios: unas veces le venía hablando de una deuda antigua que su madre tenía con la casa de Meira; otras muchas le mandaba pescado de regalo; otras, llevando las viandas en un cesto, se iba á cenar con él en grata compañía. D. Fernando, que conocía la precaria situación del marinero, rechazaba con heroísmo aquellos tan apetecidos socorros, y sólo después de largo pugilato,[2] lograba José que los aceptase, volviendo la cabeza para no ver las lágrimas de agradecimiento que el anciano caballero no era poderoso á contener. Pero estos y otros socorros no bastaban algunas veces: había días en que nadie parecía por el lóbrego caserón, y entonces era cuando D. Fernando pasaba « aquellas de Caín » á que la voz pública se refería.

Ahora las está pasando más terribles y crueles que nunca. Hace veinticuatro horas que no ha entrado alimento alguno en el estómago del noble caballero; y según se puede colegir, no es fácil que entre todavía en algunas más, pues son las doce de la noche y se encuentran todos los vecinos reposando. Á medida que el tiempo pasa crece su congoja: los paseos no son tan vivos; de vez en cuando se pasa la mano por la frente, donde corren ya algunas gotas de sudor frío, y deja

escapar algunos suspiros que mueren tristemente sin llegar á todos los ámbitos del tenebroso salón. El último vástago de la alta y poderosa casa de Meira está á punto de desfallecer. De pronto, sin darse él mismo cuenta cabal de lo que hace, movido sin duda del puro instinto de conservación, abandona rápidamente la estancia, baja las ruinosas escaleras en pocos saltos y se lanza á la calle. Una vez en ella, se queda inmóvil sin saber á dónde dirigirse.

Era una noche templada y oscura de primavera: espesos nubarrones velaban por completo el fulgor de las estrellas. D. Fernando gira la vista en torno con dolorosa expresión de angustia, y después de vacilar unos instantes, empieza á caminar lentamente á lo largo de la calle en dirección de la salida del pueblo. Al pasar por delante de las casas vacila, medita si llamará en demanda de socorro; pero un vivo sentimiento de vergüenza se apodera de él en el momento de acercarse á las puertas y sigue su camino; sigue siempre, bien convencido, sin embargo, de que pronto caerá rendido á la miseria. Empieza á sentir vértigos y nota que la vista se le turba. Al llegar delante de la casa de la señá Isabel, que es una de las últimas del lugar, se detiene... ¿Á dónde va? ¿Á morir quizá como un perro en la carretera solitaria? Entonces vuelve á mirar en torno suyo[1] y ve á su izquierda blanquear la tapia de la huerta del maestro: es una huerta amplia y feraz, llena de frutas y legumbres; la mejor que hay en el pueblo, ó por mejor decir, la única buena. El pensamiento criminal de entrar en aquella huerta y apoderarse de algunas legumbres asalta al buen hidalgo; lo rechaza al instante; le acomete otra vez; torna á re-

chazarlo. Finalmente, después de una lucha tenaz, pero desigual, vence el pecado. D. Fernando se dijo para cohonestar el proyecto de robo: — « ¿Pues qué, voy á dejarme morir de hambre? Unas cuantas patatas más ó menos no suponen nada[1] á la maestra; bastante tiene . . . mal adquirido á costa de los pobres pescadores.»

Y hé aquí cómo el hambre hizo socialista en un instante al último vástago de la gran casa de Meira.

Siguió la tapia á lo largo, torció á la izquierda y buscó por detrás de la casa el sitio más accesible para entrar. La pared por aquel sitio no era tan alta y estaba descascada y ruinosa en algunos trozos.[2] Don Fernando apoyando los pies en los agujeros logró colocarse encima; una vez allí se agarró á las ramas de un pomar y descendió por ellas lentamente y con mucha cautela hasta el suelo. Después de permanecer algunos momentos inmóvil para cerciorarse de que nadie le había sentido, se introdujo muy despacito en la huerta. Lo primero que hizo en cuanto se halló entre los cuadros de las legumbres, fué arrancar una cebolla y echarle los dientes. En cuanto la engulló, arrancó otras tres ó cuatro y se las metió en los bolsillos; después se volvió otra vez á paso de lobo[3] hacia la tapia. Mas antes de llegar á ella percibió con terror que se movían las ramas del pomar por donde había saltado, y á la escasísima claridad de la noche observó que el bulto de un hombre se agitaba entre ellas y se dejaba caer al suelo, como él había hecho. D. Fernando quedó petrificado; y mucho más creció su miedo y su vergüenza cuando el hombre dió unos cuantos pasos por la huerta y se vino hacia él: lo primero que se le ocu-

rrió fué echarse al suelo: el hombre pasó rozando con él: era José.

¿Vendrá también á robar?—pensó D. Fernando; pero José dejó salir de su boca un silbido prolongado, y el señor de Meira vino á entender que se trataba de una cita amorosa, cosa que le sorprendió bastante, pues creía, como todo el pueblo, que las relaciones de Elisa y el marinero estaban rotas hacía ya largo tiempo. No tardó en aparecer otro bulto por el lado de la casa, y ambos amantes se aproximaron y comenzaron á hablar en voz tan baja que D. Fernando no oyó más que un levísimo cuchicheo. La situación del caballero era un poco falsa; si á los jóvenes les diese por[1] recorrer la huerta ó estuviesen en ella hasta que el día apuntase y le viesen, ¡qué vergüenza! Para evitar este peligro se arrastró lenta y suavemente hasta el pomar y se ocultó entre unas malezas que cerca de él había, esperando que José se marchase para escalar de nuevo el árbol y retirarse á su casa. Mas al poco rato de estar allí[2] comenzaron á caer algunos goterones de lluvia, y los amantes vinieron también á refugiarse debajo del pomar, que era uno de los pocos árboles copudos[3] y frondosos de la huerta, y el más lejano de la casa. Don Fernando se creyó perdido y comenzó á sudar de miedo; ni un dedo se atrevió á mover. Elisa y José se sentaron en el suelo uno al lado de otro dando la espalda[4] al caballero, sin sospechar su presencia.

—¿Y por qué crees que tu madre presume algo?—dijo José en voz baja.

—No sé decirte; pero de algunos días á esta parte[5] me mira mucho y no me deja un instante sola. El otro día, mientras estaba barriendo la sala, me puse á can-

tar; al instante subió ella y me dijo: «¡Parece que estás contenta, Elisa! Hacía ya mucho tiempo que no te salía la voz del cuerpo.»[1] Me lo dijo de un modo y con una sonrisa tan falsa, que me puse colorada y me callé.

—¡Bah, son cavilaciones tuyas!—replicó el marinero.

Guardó silencio, sin embargo, después de esta exclamación y al cabo de un rato lo rompió, diciendo:

—Bueno es vivir prevenidos. Ten cuidado, no te sorprenda.

—¡Desgraciada de mí entonces! Más me valiera no haber nacido—repuso la joven con acento de terror.

Ambos volvieron á quedar silenciosos. Elisa, cabizbaja y distraída, jugaba con las hierbas del suelo. José alargó la mano tímidamente, y, simulando también jugar con el césped, consiguió rozar suavemente los dedos de su novia. La lluvia, que comenzaba á arreciar, batía las hojas del pomar con redoble[2] triste y monótono; la huerta exhalaba ya un olor penetrante de tierra mojada.

—¿Pensáis salir mañana á la mar?—preguntó Elisa al cabo de un rato, levantando sus hermosos ojos rasgados hacia el marinero.

—Me parece que no—repuso éste.—¿Para qué?—añadió con amargura.—Hace ocho días que no traemos valor de cinco duros.

—Ya lo sé, ya lo sé; este año no hay merluza en la mar.

—¡Este año no ha habido nada!—exclamó José con rabia.

Otra vez quedaron silenciosos. Elisa seguía jugando con las hierbecitas del suelo. El marinero le había aprisionado un dedo entre los suyos y lo estrechaba suavemente, sin osar apoderarse de la mano. Al cabo de un rato, Elisa, sin levantar la cabeza, comenzó á decir, en voz baja y temblorosa:

— Yo creo, José, que la causa de todo lo que nos está pasando, es la maldición que te ha echado la sacristana. ¿Por qué no vas á pedirla que te la levante? . . . Desde que esa mujer te maldijo no te ha salido nada bien.

— Y antes tampoco[1] — apuntó José con sonrisa melancólica.

— Otros muchos lo han hecho antes que tú — siguió diciendo la joven, sin hacer caso de la observación de su amante. — Mira, Pedro el de la Matiella, ya sabes cómo estaba, flaco y amarillo que daba lástima verlo[2] . . . todo el mundo pensaba que se moría. En cuanto pidió perdón á la sacristana, empezó á ponerse bueno y ya ves hoy cómo está.

— No creas esas brujerías, Elisa — dijo el marinero, con una inflexión de voz en que se adivinaba que él andaba muy cerca de creerlas también.

Elisa, sin contestar, se agarró fuertemente á su brazo con un movimiento de terror.

— ¿No has oído?

— ¿Qué?

— ¿Ahí entre las zarzas?

— No he oído nada.

— Se me figuró escuchar la respiración de una persona.

Ambos quedaron un momento inmóviles con el oído atento.

— ¡ Qué miedosa eres, Elisa ! — dijo riendo el marinero. — Es el ruido de la lluvia al pasar entre las hojas hasta el suelo.

— ¡ Me parecía ! . . . — repuso la joven sin quitar los ojos de la maleza donde estaba oculto el Sr. de Meira, y aflojando poco á poco el brazo de su novio.

Mientras tanto, aquél sudaba copiosamente temiendo que José viniese á explorar las zarzas. Afortunadamente, no fué así : Elisa se tranquilizó pronto, y viendo á su amante triste y cabizbajo, cambió de conversación con ánimo de alegrarle.

— ¿ Cuándo comenzaréis á salir al bonito ? . . . Tengo ya deseos de que empiece la costera . . . Me da el corazón[1] que va á ser muy buena . . .

— Allá veremos — repuso José moviendo la cabeza en señal de duda. — Creo que saldremos dentro de quince ó veinte días . . . ¿ Qué vamos á hacer si no ? . . .

— Comienza el buen tiempo . . . y vendrán en seguida las romerías . . . ¡ Qué gusto ! . . . La de la Luz[2] es ya de mañana en un mes — dijo Elisa esforzándose por aparecer alegre.

— ¡ Qué importa que comiencen las romerías si yo no puedo acompañarte en ellas ! — exclamó el marinero con acento dolorido.

— No te dejes acobardar, José, que todo se arreglará . . Hay que tener confianza en Dios . . . Yo todos los días le pido al Santo Cristo que te dé buena suerte, y que le toque en el corazón á mi madre.

— Es difícil, Elisa . . . es muy difícil . . . Si no me ha querido cuando tenía algunos cuartos, ¿ cómo me ha de querer hoy que soy un pobrete, y tengo sobre los hombros tanta familia ?

Elisa comprendió la justicia de esta observación; pero repuso con la tenacidad sublime que el amor comunica á las mujeres:

— No importa . . . yo creo que se ablandará. Tengamos confianza en el Santo Cristo de Rodillero, que otros milagros mayores ha sabido obrar . . .

La lluvia arreciaba con ímpetu; de tal suerte, que ya el árbol no bastaba á proteger á los amantes: las hojas se doblaban al peso del agua, y la dejaban caer en abundancia sobre sus cabezas. Pero ellos ni lo advertían siquiera, embargados enteramente por el deleite de hallarse juntos; las manos enlazadas, los ojos en extática contemplación.

Elisa logró al cabo ahuyentar la melancolía de su novio; su plática tomó un sesgo[1] risueño; hablaron de los incidentes ocurridos en pasadas romerías, y rieron de buena gana recordándolos.

— ¿Te acuerdas cuando Nicolás nos convidó en la romería de San Pedro? . . . Tú me dijiste por lo bajo:[2] — « Hay que beberle todo el vino que saque . . .»

— Porque en seguida ví que el gran tacaño[3] lo que quería era echársela de rumboso[4] á poca costa.

— ¡Qué trabajo me costó echar todo el vaso al cuerpo![5] Tú te lo bebiste en un decir Jesús[6] . . . y anda que Ramona tampoco se portó mal del todo.[7]

— Pero, cuando vió que Bernardo se lo iba á tragar entero también, ¿qué de prisa le echó mano,[8] verdad?

— ¡Como que ya no podía resistir más el pobre! — dijo Elisa rompiendo á reír. — Lo mejor de todo fué lo que decía para disculpar la porquería . . . « ¡Ésa es una broma! . . . ¡yo no quiero bromas! . . .» Cuando se me representa la cara que ponía el infeliz al vernos

apurar el vaso, me río como una loca, aunque esté sola . . .

Ambos reían en efecto, procurando no hacer ruido.

— Por cierto — siguió Elisa, fingiendo seriedad, — que tú más tarde te pusiste un poco alegre, y le diste un beso á mi prima Ramona.

— No me acuerdo.

— Sí; no te acuerdas de lo que no quieres.

— De todos modos, estando borracho, no sabe uno lo que hace.

— No se te ocurriría, sin embargo, echarte al agua.

— ¡ Claro !

— Pero se te ocurre besar á las muchachas.

— No estando borracho, jamás — afirmó resueltamente José.

— ¡ Madre mía, si en la hora de la muerte me pusieran á la cabecera tantos angelitos como besos habrás dado !

— Te irías sola para el cielo — repuso el marinero riendo.

La plática se trocaba en alegre disputa: los amantes se embriagaban con aquella charla sencilla hallando tan chistoso lo que mutuamente se decían, que no cesaban de soltar carcajadas, cuyo ruido apagaban llevando la mano á la boca. La noche, oscura y lluviosa, era para ellos plácida y grata como pocas.

Pero Elisa creyó percibir otra vez la respiración que antes la asustara.[1] Se quedó algunos instantes distraída; y no queriendo decir nada á José porque no la llamase otra vez medrosa, optó por separarse.

— Ya debe de ser muy tarde, José — dijo levantán-

dose. — Mañana tengo que madrugar . . . además, nos estamos poniendo como una sopa.[1]

El marinero se levantó también, aunque no de buen grado.

— ¡Qué bien se pasa el tiempo á tu lado, Elisa! — dijo tímidamente.

La joven sonrió con dulzura oyendo aquella declaración que el marinero no había osado pronunciar hasta entonces, y un poco ruborizada le tendió la mano.

— Hasta mañana, José.

José tomó aquella mano, la estrechó tierna y largamente, y contestó con melancolía:

— Hasta mañana.

Pero no acababa de soltarla: fué necesario que Elisa dijese otra vez:

— Hasta mañana, José.

Tiró de ella con fuerza, y se alejó rápidamente en dirección á la casa. El marinero no se movió, hasta que calculó que estaba ya dentro: luego escaló cautelosamente la cerca, montó sobre ella, y desapareció por el otro lado.

Algunos instantes después, salía de su escondite el Sr. de Meira mojado hasta los huesos.

— ¡ Pobres muchachos! — exclamó sin acordarse de su propia miseria y trepando con trabajo por el pomar. Y una vez en la calle, enderezó los pasos hacia su mansión feudal acariciando en la mente un noble, cuanto singular proyecto.[2]

XI

Pocos días después, D. Fernando de Meira se personó en casa de José, muy temprano, cuando éste aun no había salido á la mar.

— José, necesito hablar contigo á solas; ven á dar una vuelta[1] conmigo.

El marinero pensó que llegaba en demanda de socorro, aunque hasta entonces jamás se lo había pedido directamente: cuando el hambre más le apuraba, solía llegarse á él, diciéndole:

— José, á Sinforosa se le ha concluido el pan, y no quisiera tomárselo á la otra panadera... Si me hicieses el favor de prestarme una hogaza...

Mas para que á esto llegase, era necesario que el caballero estuviese muy apurado; de otra suerte, ni directa ni indirectamente se humillaba á pedir nada. No obstante, José lo pensó así, porque no era fácil pensar otra cosa, y tomando el puñado de cuartos que tenía y metiéndolos en el bolsillo, se echó á la calle[2] en compañía del anciano.

Guióle D. Fernando fuera del pueblo, y cuando estuvieron á alguna distancia, cerca ya de la gran playa de arena, rompió el silencio diciendo:

— Vamos á ver, José, tú debes de andar algo apuradico de dinero, ¿verdad?[3]

José pensó que se confirmaba lo que había imaginado; pero le sorprendió un poco el tono de protección con que el hidalgo le hacía aquella pregunta.

— Phs . . . así así,[1] D. Fernando. No estoy muy sobrado . . . pero en fin, mientras uno es joven y puede trabajar, no suele faltar un pedazo de pan.

— Un pedazo de pan es poco . . . No sólo de pan vive el hombre[2] — manifestó el señor de Meira sentenciosamente; y después de caminar algunos instantes en silencio, se detuvo repentinamente, y encarándose con el marinero le preguntó:

— ¿Tú te casarías de buena gana con Elisa, verdad? José quedó sorprendido y confuso.

— ¿Yo? . . . Con Elisa no tengo nada ya[3] . . . Todo el mundo lo sabe . . .

— Pues sabe una gran mentira, porque estás en amores con Elisa;[4] me consta — afirmó el caballero resueltamente.

José le miró asustado, y empezaba á balbucir ya otra negación cuando D. Fernando le atajó diciendo:

— No te molestes en negarlo, y dime con franqueza si te casarías gustoso.

— ¡Ya lo creo! — murmuró entonces el marinero bajando la cabeza.

— Pues te casarás — dijo el Sr. de Meira ahuecando la voz todo lo posible y extendiendo las dos manos hacia adelante.

José levantó la cabeza vivamente y le miró, pensando que se había vuelto loco; después, bajándola de nuevo, dijo:

— Eso es imposible, D. Fernando . . . No pensemos en ello.

— Para la casa de Meira no hay nada imposible — respondió el caballero con mucha mayor solemnidad.[5]

José sacudió la cabeza, atreviéndose á dudar del poderío de aquella ilustre casa.

— Nada hay imposible — volvió á decir D. Fernando lanzándole una mirada altiva, propia de un guerrero de la reconquista.[1]

José sonrió con disimulo.

— Atiende un poco — siguió el caballero: — en el siglo pasado, un abuelo mío, don Álvaro de Meira, era corregidor[2] de Oviedo. Había allí una casa perteneciente al clero que estorbaba mucho en la vía pública, y el corregidor se propuso echarla abajo. Tropezó en seguida con la oposición del Obispo y cabildo catedral, los cuales le manifestaron que de ningún modo lo intentase, so pena de excomunión; pero el corregidor, sin hacer caso de amenazas, cierto día manda á ella una cuadrilla de albañiles y comienzan á derribarla. Dan parte del hecho al Obispo, alborótase su ilustrísima,[3] convoca al cabildo y deciden ir revestidos á excomulgar á todo el que se atreva á tocar en ella; pero mi bisabuelo lo supo, ¿y qué hace entonces? Va y manda á allá[4] al verdugo á leer un pregón en que se impone la pena de cien azotes á todo albañil que se baje del tejado... ¡Ni uno solo se bajó, muchacho!... Y la casa vino al suelo.

D. Fernando, con un movimiento enérgico de la mano, derribó de golpe el edificio clerical; mas José pareció enteramente insensible á esta proeza de los Meiras: seguía cabizbajo y triste, considerando tal vez que era lástima que tal poder de infligir azotes no quedase anejo á todos los señores de Meira, en cuyo caso no sería imposible que pidiese unos cuantos para la señá Isabel.

—Cuando á un Meira se le mete algo entre ceja y ceja[1]—siguió el hidalgo,—¡hay que temblar!... Toma—añadió sacando del bolsillo un paquetito y ofreciéndoselo:—Ahí tienes diez mil reales: cómprate una lancha, y deja lo demás de mi cuenta.[2]

El marinero quedó pasmado, y no se atrevió á alargar la mano pensando que aquello era una locura del Sr. de Meira, á quien ya muchos no suponían en su cabal juicio.

—Toma, te digo; cómprate una lancha, y á trabajar.

José tomó el paquete, lo desenvolvió y quedó aún más absorto al ver que eran monedas de oro. D. Fernando, sonriendo orgullosamente continuó:

—Vamos á otra cosa ahora. Dime: ¿cuántos años tiene Elisa?

—Veinte.

—¿Los ha cumplido ya?

—No señor; me parece que los cumple el mes que viene.[3]

—Perfectamente: el mes que viene te diré lo que has de hacer. Mientras tanto, procura que nadie se entere de tus amores... mucho sigilo y mucha prudencia.

D. Fernando hablaba con tal autoridad, y arqueaba las cejas tan extremadamente, que á pesar de su figurilla menuda y torcida, consiguió infundir respeto al marinero; casi llegó á creer en el misterioso é invencible poder de la casa de Meira.

—Á otra cosa... ¿Tú puedes disponer de la lancha esta noche?

—¿Qué lancha? ¿la de mi patrón?

—Sí.

— ¿Para ir á dónde?

— Para dar un saleo.[1]

— Si no es más que para eso . . .

— Pues á las doce de la noche, pásate por mi casa[2] dispuesto á salir á la mar: necesito de tu ayuda para una cosa que ya sabrás . . . Ahora vuélvete á casa y comienza á gestionar[3] la compra de la lancha; vé á Sarrió por ella, ó constrúyela aquí; como mejor te parezca.

Confuso y en grado sumo perplejo se apartó nuestro pescador del señor de Meira; todo se volvía cavilar mientras caminaba la vuelta de su casa[4] de qué modo habría llegado aquel dinero á manos del arruinado hidalgo, y se propuso no hacer uso de él en tanto que no[5] lo averiguase. Pero como los enigmas, particularmente los enigmas de dinero, duran en las aldeas cortísimo tiempo, no se pasaron dos horas sin que supiese que D. Fernando había vendido su casa el día anterior á D. Anacleto, el cual la quería para hacer de ella una fábrica de escabeche, no para otra cosa, pues en realidad estaba inhabitable. El señor de Meira la tenía empeñada ya hacía algún tiempo á un comerciante de Peñascosa en nueve mil reales. D. Anacleto pagó esta cantidad y le dió además otros catorce mil. En vista de esto, José se determinó á devolver los cuartos al generoso caballero tan pronto como le viese, porque le pareció indecoroso aceptar, aunque fuese en calidad de préstamo, un dinero de que tan necesitado estaba su dueño.

Todavía le seguía preocupando, no obstante, aquella misteriosa cita de la noche, y aguardaba con impaciencia la hora, para ver lo que era. Un poco antes de dar

las doce por el reloj de las Consistoriales[1] enderezó los pasos hacia el palacio de Meira; llamó con un golpe á la carcomida puerta y no tardó mucho el propio D. Fernando en abrirle.

— Puntual eres, José. ¿Tienes la lancha á flote?

— Debe de estar, sí señor.

— Pues bien; ven aquí y ayúdame á llevar á ella esto.

D. Fernando le señaló á la luz de un candil un bulto que descansaba en el zaguán de la casa, envuelto en un pedazo de lona y amarrado con cordeles.

— Es muy pesado, te lo advierto.

Efectivamente, al tratar de moverlo se vió que era casi imposible llevarlo al hombro. José pensó que era una caja de hierro.

— En hombros no podemos llevarlo, D. Fernando. ¿No será mejor que lo arrastremos poco á poco hasta la ribera?

— Como á ti te parezca.

Arrastráronlo, en efecto, fuera de la casa; apagó D. Fernando el candil, cerró la puerta y, dándole vueltas, no con poco trabajo, lo llevaron lentamente hasta colocarlo cerca de la lancha. El señor de Meira iba taciturno y melancólico, sin despegar los labios: José le seguía el humor, pero sentía al propio tiempo bastante curiosidad por averiguar lo que aquella pesadísima caja contenía.

Fué necesario colocar dos mástiles desde el suelo á la lancha y, gracias á ellos, hicieron rodar la caja hasta meterla á bordo. Entraron después, y con el mayor silencio posible se fueron apartando de las otras embarcaciones.

La noche era de luna, clara y hermosa; el mar tranquilo y dormido como un lago; el ambiente, tibio como en estío. José empuñó dos remos, contra la voluntad del hidalgo, que pretendía tomar uno, y apoyándolos suavemente en el agua se alejó de la tierra.

El señor de Meira iba sentado á popa, tan silencioso y taciturno como había salido de casa. José, tirando acompasadamente de los remos, le observaba con interés. Cuando estuvieron á unas dos millas de Rodillero, después de doblar la punta del Cuerno, don Fernando se puso en pie.

— Basta, José.

El marinero soltó los remos.

— Ayúdame á echar este bulto al agua.

José acudió á ayudarle; pero deseoso, cada vez más, de descubrir aquel extraño misterio, se atrevió á preguntar sonriendo:

— ¿Supongo que no será dinero lo que V. eche al agua, D. Fernando?

Éste, que se hallaba en cuclillas preparándose á levantar el bulto, suspendió de pronto la operación, se puso en pie y dijo:

— No; no es dinero . . . es algo que vale más que el dinero . . . Me olvidaba de que tú tienes derecho á saber lo que es, puesto que me has hecho el favor de acompañarme.

— No se lo decía por eso, D. Fernando: á mí no me importa nada lo que hay ahí dentro.

— Desátalo.

— De ningún modo, D. Fernando; yo no quiero que V. piense . . .

— ¡Desátalo, te digo! — repitió el señor de Meira, en un tono que no daba lugar á réplica.

Obedeció José y, después de separar la múltiple envoltura de lona que le cubría, descubrió, al cabo, el objeto, el cual no era otra cosa que un trozo de piedra toscamente labrado.

— ¿Qué es esto? — preguntó con asombro.

D. Fernando, con palabra arrastrada y cavernosa, contestó:

— El escudo de la casa de Meira.

Hubo después un silencio embarazoso. José no salía de su asombro y miraba de hito en hito[1] al caballero, esperando alguna explicación; pero éste no se apresuraba á dársela: con los brazos cruzados sobre el pecho y la cabeza doblada hacia adelante, contemplaba sin pestañear la piedra que el marinero acababa de poner al descubierto. Al fin dijo en voz baja y temblorosa:

— He vendido mi casa á D. Anacleto . . . porque un día ú otro yo moriré, y ¿qué importa que pare en manos extrañas antes ó después? . . . Pero se la vendí bajo condición de arrancar de ella el escudo . . . Hace unos cuantos días que trabajo por las noches en separar la piedra de la pared . . .: al fin lo he conseguido . . .

Como D. Fernando se callase[2] después de pronunciar estas palabras, José se creyó en el caso de[3] preguntarle:

— ¿Y por qué lo echa V. al agua?

El anciano caballero le miró con ojos de indignación.

— ¡Zambombo! ¿Quieres que el escudo de la gran casa de Meira esté sobre una fábrica de escabeche?

Y aplacándose de pronto, añadió:

— Mira, esas armas . . . repáralas bien . . . Desde el siglo XV están colocadas sobre la puerta de la casa de

Meira . . . (no esta misma piedra, porque según se ha ido enlazando con otras casas fué necesario mudarla y poner en el escudo nuevos cuarteles,[1] pero otra parecida). En el siglo pasado quedó definitivamente fijada con la alianza de los Meiras y los Mirandas . . . Son cinco cuarteles; el del centro es el de los Meiras: está colocado en lo que se llama en heráldica *punto de honor*[2] . . . Sus armas son: azur y banda de plata, con dragantes de oro; bordura de plata y ocho arminios de sable[3] . . . Tú dirás — añadió D. Fernando con sonrisa protectora, — ¿dónde están esos colores? . . . Es muy natural que lo preguntes, no teniendo nociones de heráldica . . . Los colores en la piedra se representan por medio de signos convencionales: el oro, míralo aquí en este cuartel, se representa por medio de puntitos trazados con buril; la plata, por un fondo liso y unido; el azur, por rayitas horizontales; los gules, por rayas perpendiculares, etc., etc. . . . es muy largo de explicar . . . Los Meiras se unieron primeramente á los Viedmas, y aquí está su escudo en este primer cuartel de gules y una puente de plata de tres arcos, por los cuales corre un caudaloso río; y una torre de oro levantada en medio de la puente; bordura de plata y ocho cruces llanas de azur[4] . . . Después se unieron á los Carrascos, y aquí tienes á la izquierda su cuartel, partido en dos partes iguales: la primera de plata y un león rapante de sable; la segunda de oro y un árbol terrazado y copado, con un pájaro puesto encima de la copa y un perro ladrante al pie del tronco[5] . . . Ni el pájaro ni el perro se notan bien, porque los ha destruido la intemperie . . . pero aquí están . . . Más tarde se unieron á los Ángulos: su cuartel es de plata y cinco

cuervos de sable puestos en sautor[1] ... Tampoco se notan bien los cuervos ... Por último, se unieron á los Mirandas, cuyo cuartel es de oro y un castillo de gules en abismo, sumado de un guerrero armado con alabarda, naciente de las almenas, acompañado de cinco roeles de sinople y plata, puestos dos de cada lado y uno en la punta[2] ... Todo el escudo, como ves, está coronado por un casco de acero bruñido de cinco rejas.

Nada entendió el marinero del discurso del señor de Meira; mirábale de hito en hito con asombro. El mar balanceaba suavemente la barca.

— De la casa de Meira — siguió D. Fernando con voz enfática — han salido en todas las épocas hijos muy esclarecidos; hombres muy calificados ... Demasiado sabrás tú que en el siglo XV D. Pedro de Meira fué comendador de Villaplana, en la orden de Santiago,[3] y que D. Francisco fué jurado[4] en Sevilla y procurador en las Cortes de Toro.[5] También sabrás que otro hijo de la misma familia fué presidente del Consejo de Italia:[6] se llamaba D. Rodrigo: otro, llamado D. Diego, fué oidor de la real Audiencia[7] de la ciudad de Méjico y después presidente de la de Guadalajara. En el siglo pasado, D. Álvaro de Meira fué regidor[8] de Oviedo y fundó en Sarrió una colegiata y un colegio de primeras letras y latinidad; bien lo sabrás.

José no sabía absolutamente nada de todo aquello; pero asentía con la cabeza para complacer al desgraciado caballero, el cual se quedó repentinamente silencioso, y así estuvo buen rato, hasta que comenzó á decir, bajando mucho la voz y con acento triste:

— Mi hermano mayor, Pepe, fué un perdido ... bien lo sabrás ...

En efecto, era lo único que José sabía de la familia de Meira.

— Le arruinó una bailarina... Los pocos bienes que á mí me habían tocado, me los llevó amenazándome con casarse con ella si no se los cedía... Yo, para salvar el honor de la casa, los cedí... ¿No te parece que hice bien?

José asintió otra vez.

— Desde entonces, José, ¡cuánto he sufrido!... ¡cuánto he sufrido!

El hidalgo se pasó la mano por la frente con abatimiento.

— La gran casa de Meira muere conmigo... pero, no morirá deshonrada, José; ¡te lo juro!

Después de hacer este juramento, quedó de nuevo silencioso en actitud melancólica. El mar seguía meciendo la lancha. La luna rielaba su pálida luz[1] en el agua.

Al cabo de un largo espacio, D. Fernando salió de su meditación, y volviendo sus ojos rasados de lágrimas hacia José, que le contemplaba con tristeza, le dijo lanzando un suspiro:

— Vamos allá[2]... Suspende por ese lado la piedra: yo tendré por éste...

Entre uno y otro lograron apoyarla sobre el carel. Después, D. Fernando la dió un fuerte empujón: el escudo de la casa de Meira rompió el haz del agua con estrépito, y se hundió en sus senos oscuros. Las gotas amargas que salpicó bañaron el rostro del anciano, confundiéndose con las lágrimas no menos amargas que en aquel instante vertía.

Quedóse algunos instantes inmóvil, con el cuerpo

doblado sobre el carel mirando al sitio por donde la piedra había desaparecido; levantándose después, dijo sordamente:

— Boga para tierra, José.

Y fué á sentarse de nuevo á la popa.

El marinero comenzó á mover los remos sin decir palabra. Aunque no comprendía el dolor del hidalgo y andaba cerca de pensar, como los demás vecinos, que no estaba sano de la cabeza, al verle llorar sentía profunda lástima y no osaba turbar su triste enajenamiento. Mas el propósito de devolverle el dinero, no se apartaba de su cabeza, porque veía claramente que tal favor en las circunstancias en que se hallaba D. Fernando, era una verdadera locura: le bullía el deseo de acometer el asunto, pero no sabía de qué manera comenzar: tres ó cuatro veces tuvo la palabra en la punta de la lengua, y otras tantas la retiró por no parecerle adecuada. Finalmente, viéndose ya cerca de tierra, no halló traza mejor para salir del aprieto que sacar los diez mil reales del bolsillo y presentárselos al caballero diciendo algo avergonzado:

— D. Fernando . . . V., por lo que veo, no está muy sobrado de dinero . . . Yo le agradezco mucho lo que quiere hacer por mí, pero no debo tomar esos cuartos haciéndole falta[1] . . .

D. Fernando, con ademán descompuesto[2] y soltando chispas de indignación por los ojos, le interrumpió gritando:

— ¡ Pendejo! ¡ Zambombo! ¡ Después que te hice el honor de confesarte mi ruina, me insultas! Guarda ese dinero ahora mismo, ó lo tiro al agua . . .

José comprendió que no había más remedio que

guardarlo otra vez; y así lo hizo después de pedirle perdón por el supuesto insulto. Formó intención, no obstante, de vigilar para que nada le faltara y devolvérselo en la primera ocasión favorable.

Saltaron en tierra y se separaron como buenos amigos.

XII

GUARDÓ el secreto de todo aquello José: así se lo había pedido con instancia D. Fernando. Volvió éste á prometerle que se casaría con Elisa si ejecutaba punto por punto cuanto le ordenase, y le hizo creer que del sigilo con que se llevase el asunto pendía enteramente el suceso de él.

Mediante la cantidad de seis reales cada día, halló el buen caballero hospedaje, si no adecuado á la antigüedad y nobleza de su estirpe, suficiente para no perder la vida de hambre, como no había estado lejos de acontecer, según sabemos. Y ¡caso raro! desde que se vió con algunos cuartos en el bolsillo, subió todavía algunos palmos[1] su orgullo nobiliario: andaba por el pueblo con la cabeza erguida, el paso sosegado y firme, echando á los vecinos miradas muy más propias del Renacimiento[2] que de nuestros días, saludando á las jóvenes con una sonrisa galante y protectora, como si aun ejerciese sobre ellas el ominoso derecho de pernada.

Donde quiera que la ocasión se ofrecía, brindaba á sus vasallos con alguna copa de vino, y á las vasallas con golosinas de la confitería. Pero hay que declarar á fuer de verídicos[3] que los villanos y las villanas de

Rodillero no aceptaban los favores de D. Fernando con aquel respeto y sumisión con que sus mayores en otros tiempos recibían los desperdicios[1] feudales de la gran casa de Meira; antes parecía que al beber el vino y al tomar los confites lo hacían por pura condescendencia, por no herir la delicada susceptibilidad del hidalgo: y aun se advertía en todos ellos una cierta sonrisa de compasión, que á poderla ver, hubiera hecho estremecerse en sus tumbas á todos los hijos de aquella ilustre casa, al comendador de Villaplana, al procurador de las Cortes de Toro, al presidente del Consejo de Italia, etc., etc. Y por si[2] esta sonrisa de compasión no fuese bastante para ajar el prestigio de su linaje, los comentarios que se hacían á espaldas del caballero eran mucho más humillantes todavía: — « Este pobre Don Fernando se figura que catorce mil reales no se concluyen nunca. — ¡ Cuánto mejor sería que con ese dinero pusiese una tiendecita y le sacase un rédito![3] — Nada;[4] se lo va á gastar en cuatro días,[5] y luego vamos á tener que mantenerlo de limosna.»

Elisa, una de las feudatarias más hermosas que el señor de Meira tenía en Rodillero, era asimismo una de las más rebeldes. En vano el noble señor se esforzaba en brindarla protección siempre que la hallaba al paso;[6] en vano la ofreció repetidas veces un cartuchito[7] de almendras traídas exprofeso de Sarrió; en vano desenvolvía con ella todos los recursos de la más refinada galantería que recordaba los buenos tiempos de la casa de Austria.[8] La linda zagala acogía aquellos homenajes con sonrisa dulce y benévola, donde no se advertía ni rastro de admiración ó temor; y algunas veces, cuando los acatamientos ceremoniosos y las fra-

ses melífluas subían de punto,[1] hasta se vislumbraba detrás de sus ojos tristes y suaves cierta leve expresión de burla. La verdad es que la naturaleza no había secundado poco ni mucho las disposiciones feudales de D. Fernando; al verle con su cuerpecillo contrahecho delante de la figura elevada y gentil de Elisa, la imaginación más poderosa y amiga de forjarse quimeras no podría seguramente representarse al señor del castillo delante de una tímida villana.

Por dos ó tres veces[2] la había preguntado, rompiendo súbitamente el hilo de sus discreteos[3] clásicos:

— ¿Cuántos años tienes?

— Veinte.

La última vez le dijo:

— ¿Tienes tu fe de bautismo?[4]

— Me parece que sí, señor.

— Pues tráemela mañana. ¡Pero cuidado que nadie sepa nada! Yo he resuelto que tú y José os caséis á la mayor brevedad.[5]

Al escuchar estas palabras volvió á aparecer en los labios de Elisa aquella sonrisa benévola y compasiva de que hemos hecho mención, y al separarse del caballero, después de un rato de plática, no pudo menos de murmurar:

— ¡Pobre D. Fernando; qué rematado está!

Sin embargo, por consejo de José, que algo, aunque no mucho, fiaba en el poder de la casa de Meira, le llevó al día siguiente el documento. Nada se perdía en ello y se complacía al buen señor. La joven, que no tenía motivo alguno para fiar en aquel poder, como su novio, tomó el asunto en chanza.

Lo que tomaba muy en serio era la maldición de la

sacristana; cada día más. En su alma candorosa, siempre había echado raíces la superstición: al ver ahora la constancia implacable con que la suerte se empeñaba en estorbar su felicidad, era natural que lo achacase á una potencia oculta y misteriosa, la cual, bien considerada, no podía ser otra que la malquerencia de aquella bruja. Para deshacer ó contrarrestar su poder acudía á menudo en oración al camarín[1] del Santísimo Cristo de Rodillero, famosa imagen, encontrada en medio de la mar por unos pescadores hace algunos siglos.

Pero en vano fué que en poco tiempo le pusiese[2] más de una docena de cirios y le rezase más de un millón de padrenuestros; en vano, también, que se ofreciese á pasar un día entero en el camarín sin probar bocado,[3] y lo cumpliese: el Santísimo Cristo, ó no la escuchaba ó quería experimentar aún más su fortaleza. El negocio de sus amores iba cada día peor: pensando serenamente, podía decirse que estaba perdido: José cada vez más azotado por la desgracia; ella cada vez más sometida al yugo pesado de su madre, sin osar moverse sin su permiso ni replicarle palabra.

En tan triste situación, comenzó á acariciar la idea de desagraviar á la sacristana, y vencer de esta suerte el influjo desgraciado que pudiera tener en su vida. Lo primero que se le ocurrió fué que José le pidiese perdón, y repetidas veces se lo aconsejó con instancia; pero viendo que aquél se negaba resueltamente á ello, y conociendo su carácter tenaz y decidido, se determinó ella misma á humillarse.

Una tarde, á la hora de la siesta, dejando la casa sosegada, salióse sin ser vista y enderezó los pasos por

el camino escarpado que conducía á la casa del sacristán, la cual estaba vecina de la iglesia y, una y otra, apartadas bastante del pueblo, sobre una meseta que formaba hacia la mitad la montaña. Como iba tan preocupada y confusa, no vió á la madre de José, que estaba cortando tojo para el horno, no muy lejos del camino. Ésta levantó la cabeza y se dijo con sorpresa: — ¡ Calle ![1] ¿ á dónde irá Elisa á estas horas? — Siguióla con la vista primero y, llena de curiosidad, echó á andar en pos de ella[2] para no perderla. Vió que se detenía á la puerta de la casa del sacristán, que llamaba y que entraba.

— ¡ Ah, grandísima pícara! — dijo con voz irritada. — ¡ Conque eres uña y carne de[3] la sacristana! ¡ Ya me parecía á mí que con esa cara de mosquita muerta[4] no podías ser cosa buena! . . . ¡ Yo te arreglaré, buena pieza ;[5] yo te arreglaré!

Sólo porque Elisa entraba en casa de la sacristana, ya era uña y carne de ella. Esta falta de lógica, siempre había sido característica de Teresa: la cólera ofuscaba enteramente el escaso juicio que Dios la había dado. Aparentaba despreciar la maldición de la sacristana, y su orgullo salvaje la impulsaba á desatarse en insultos siempre que de ésta se hablaba; pero en realidad, no había en Rodillero quien creyese más á pie juntillas[6] en tales hechicerías.

Salió Eugenia á recibir á la joven, y se quedó grandemente sorprendida de su visita; pero al saber el objeto de ella, mostróse muy satisfecha y triunfante. Elisa se lo explicó ruborizada y balbuciendo. La sacristana, hinchándose hasta un grado indecible, se negó á otorgar su perdón mientras la misma Teresa y

José no viniesen á pedírselo. En vano fué que Elisa se lo suplicase con lágrimas en los ojos; en vano que se arrojase á sus pies y con las manos cruzadas le pidiese misericordia; nada pudo conseguir. La sacristana, gozándose en aquella humillación y casi creyendo en el poder sobrenatural que los sencillos pescadores le daban, repetía siempre en actitud soberbia:

— No hay perdón, mientras la misma Teresa no venga á pedírmelo de rodillas . . . así como tú estás ahora.

Elisa se retiró con el alma acongojada: bien comprendía que era de todo punto imposible decidir á la madre de su novio á dar este paso; y viendo que la sacristana se negaba á levantarla, creyó aún con más firmeza en la virtud de su maldición.

Caminaba con paso vacilante, los ojos en el suelo, meditando en la desgracia que había acompañado siempre á sus amores: sin duda, Dios no los quería, á juzgar por los obstáculos que sobre ellos había amontonado en poco tiempo. El camino por donde bajaba era revuelto y pendiente; de trecho en trecho tenía algunos espacios llanos á manera de descansos.

Al llegar á uno de ellos, salióle inopinadamente al encuentro Teresa. Como á pesar del desabrimiento[1] de las dos familias nunca le había demostrado la madre de José antipatía, Elisa sonrió para saludarla: pero Teresa acercándose, contestó al saludo con una terrible bofetada.

Al verse maltratada tan inesperadamente, la pobre Elisa quedó sobrecogida, y en vez de defenderse, se llevó las manos á los ojos y rompió á sollozar con gran sentimiento.

Teresa, después de este acto de barbarie, quedó á su

vez suspensa y descontenta de sí misma: la actitud humilde y resignada de Elisa la sorprendió. Y para cohonestar su acción indigna, ó por ventura, para aturdirse y escapar al remordimiento, comenzó á vociferar como tenía por costumbre injuriando á su víctima.

—¡Anda, pícara, ves[1] á reunirte otra vez con la sacristana! ¿Estás aprendiendo para bruja?[2] Yo te regalaré el palo de la escoba. ¡Vaya, vaya, con la mosquita muerta! ¡Y cómo saca los pies de las alforjas![3] ¡Yo pensé que no necesitabas salir fuera de casa para aprender brujerías!

Tal efecto hicieron sobre la infeliz muchacha estos insultos injustificados después de los golpes, que no pudiendo resistir á la emoción, se dejó caer desmayada en el suelo. Esto acabó enteramente de desconcertar á la viuda; y por un impulso del corazón, muy natural en su carácter arrebatado, pasó repentinamente de la cólera á la compasión, y corriendo á sostener á Elisa en sus brazos, comenzó á decirla al oído:

—¡Pobrecilla! ¡Pobrecilla! ¡No hagas caso de mí, pichona![4] ... ¿Te he hecho daño, verdad? ... Soy una loca ... ¡Pobrecilla mía! ¡Pegarte, siendo tan buena y tan hermosa! ... ¡Qué dirá mi José cuando lo sepa! ...

Y viendo que Elisa no volvía en sí, comenzó á mesarse el cabello con desesperación.

—¡Bestia, bestia! ¡No hay mujer más bestia que yo! ¡Santo Cristo bendito, ayúdame y socorre á esta niña! ... ¡Elisa, Elisina, vuelve en ti, por Dios, mi corazón!

Pero la joven no acababa de salir del síncope. Teresa giraba la vista en torno buscando agua para echar-

le á la cara. Al fin, no viéndola por ninguna parte y no atreviéndose á dejar sola á Elisa, tomó el partido de levantarla en sus robustos brazos y llevarla á cuestas[1] hasta una fuente que había algo más abajo. Cuando la hubo rociado las sienes con agua, recobró el conocimiento; la viuda se apresuró á besarla y pedirla perdón; pero aquellas vivas y extremadas caricias, en vez de tranquilizarla, estuvieron á punto de hacerla perder de nuevo el sentido; tanto la sorprendieron. Por fin, entre sollozos y lágrimas, pudo decir:

— Muchas gracias... Es V. muy buena...

— ¡Qué he de ser buena![2] — prorrumpió Teresa con gran vehemencia. — Soy una loca rematada... La buena eres tú, mi palomita... ¿Estás bien?... ¿Te he hecho mucho daño?... ¡Qué dirá mi José cuando lo sepa!

— Fuí á casa de la sacristana á pedirla que le levantase la maldición...

Teresa al oír esto comenzó otra vez á mesarse el cabello.

— ¡Si soy una bestia![3] ¡Si soy una loca! Razón tienen en decir que debiera estar atada... ¡Pegar á esta criatura por hacerme un beneficio!

Fué necesario que Elisa la consolase, y sólo después de afirmar repetidas veces que no la había hecho daño, que ya le había pasado el susto y que la perdonaba y la quería, logró calmarla.

En esto ya la joven se había levantado del suelo: Teresa le sacudió la ropa cuidadosamente, le enjugó las lágrimas con su delantal, y abrazándola y besándola con efusión gran número de veces, la fué acompañando por la calzada de la iglesia, llevándola abrazada por la

cintura, hasta que dieron en el pueblo.[1] Por el camino hablaron de José (¿de qué otra cosa podían hablar de más gusto para las dos?); Elisa manifestó á Teresa que ó se casaría con su hijo ó con ninguno; ésta se mostró altamente satisfecha y lisonjeada de este cariño; se hicieron mutuas confidencias y revelaciones; se prometieron trabajar con alma y vida para que aquella unión se realizase, y, por último, al llegar al pueblo, se despidieron muy cariñosamente. Teresa, todavía avergonzada de lo que había hecho, preguntó á la joven antes de separarse:

—¿No es verdad, Elisina, que me perdonas de corazón?

—¡Bah!—repuso ésta con sonrisa dulce y graciosa.—Si V. me ha pegado, es porque puede hacerlo... ¿No soy ya su hija?

Teresa la abrazó de nuevo, llorando.

XIII

El suceso anterior, que pudo muy bien desbaratar los planes tenebrosos de la casa de Meira respecto á la suerte de Elisa y José, vino por su dichosa resolución á secundarlos. Porque á partir de este día, se entabló una firme amistad entre Elisa y la madre de su novio, la cual procuraron ambas mantener oculta por necesidad: veíanse furtivamente, cambiábanse rápidamente la palabra y se daban recados de José y para José; las entrevistas de éste con la joven continuaban siendo en las horas más silenciosas de la noche. En el pensamiento de los tres estaba el escogitar los medios de

realizar el apetecido matrimonio contra la voluntad de la maestra, pues ya estaban bien convencidos de que nada lograrían de ella. Elisa se representaba bien claramente que la causa de aquella ruda oposición no era otra que la avaricia, el disgusto de entregar los bienes que pertenecían á su difunto padre; pero no sólo no lo confesaba á nadie, sino que hacía esfuerzos por no creerlo, y alejar de sí tal pensamiento: y aun se prometía muchas veces despojarse de su hacienda cuando[1] llegase el caso, para no causar pesadumbre alguna á su madre.

Mas aunque en ella y en José tal pensamiento estuviese presente, no acertaban á dar un paso para ponerlo en vías de obra;[2] la rudeza del pobre marinero, y la supina ignorancia de las mujeres, no les consentía ver en aquel asunto un solo rayo de luz. En esta ocasión, como en tantas otras durante la Edad Media, fué necesario que el castillo viniese en socorro del estado llano.[3] La casa de Meira, sin que ellos lo supiesen, ni menos[4] persona alguna de Rodillero, trabajaba en favor suyo silenciosamente, con el misterio y sigilo diplomáticos que ha caracterizado siempre á los grandes linajes, á los Atridas, á los Médicis, á los Austrias. Más de media docena de veces había ido D. Fernando á Sarrió y había vuelto sin que nadie se enterase del verdadero negocio que allá le llevaba: unas veces era para comprar aparejos de pesca, otras para encargarse unos zapatos, otras á ver un pariente enfermo, etc., etc.; siempre mintiendo y engañando sútilmente á todo el mundo con un refinamiento verdaderamente florentino. Lo mismo Teresa que Elisa, no dejaban de advertir que la sombra del noble vástago las protegía;

había señales ciertas para pensarlo: cuando cruzaba á su lado las dirigía hondas miradas de inteligencia acompañadas á veces de ciertos guiños inexplicables, otras de alguna palabra misteriosa como « esperanza; » « los amigos velan; » « silencio y reserva; » y así por el estilo[1] otras varias destinadas á conmoverlas y sobresaltarlas; pero ellas la mayor parte de las veces no se daban por entendidas, ó porque no las entendieran realmente, ó porque no concediesen á los manejos diplomáticos del caballero toda la importancia que tenían. Sólo José estaba al tanto de ellos en cierta manera, aunque no mucho confiaba en su eficacia.

Un día D. Fernando le llamó á su posada, y presentándole un papel le dijo:

— Es necesario que firme Elisa este documento.

— ¿Pero, cómo? . . .

— Llévalo en el bolsillo; provéete de un tintero de asta y una pluma . . . y á la primera ocasión . . . ¿entiendes?

— Sí, señor.

— Quedamos en eso.[2]

Devuelto el papel al cabo de algunos días con la firma, el caballero le dijo:

— Es necesario que preguntes á Elisa si está dispuesta á todo; á desobedecer á su madre y á vivir fuera de su casa algunos meses, para casarse contigo.[3]

Esta comisión fué de mucho mayor empeño[4] y dificultad para el marinero. Elisa no podía decidirse á dar un paso tan atrevido. No el temor de cometer un pecado y faltar á sus deberes filiales la embarazaba, pues por el cura que la confesaba sabía que siendo la oposición de los padres irracional ó fundada única-

mente sobre motivos de intereses, estaba en su derecho faltando á la obediencia: pero siempre había vivido tan supeditada á su madre, tenía tantísimo miedo á su cólera fría y cruel, que la idea de aparecer en plena rebelión ante ella, la aterraba. Fué necesario que pasasen muchos días, que José la suplicase infinitas veces hasta con lágrimas en los ojos, y que ella se persuadiese á que no había absolutamente otro recurso ni otro medio de salir de aquella angustiosa situación y alcanzar lo que tan ardientemente deseaba, para que al fin viniese á consentir en ello.

Noticioso el Sr. de Meira de esta concesión, dijo á José en el tono imperativo propio de su rango:

— Esta tarde ven á buscarme; tenemos que hacer juntos.

José inclinó la cabeza en testimonio de sumisión.

— ¿Te encuentras resuelto á todo?

La misma señal de respeto.

— Perfectamente: no desmereces del alto concepto que de ti había formado. En los asuntos arduos es menester que se aúnen la diplomacia y el valor . . .; entiéndelo bien. Tal ha sido lo que caracterizó siempre á mi familia: prudencia y decisión. El adelantado D. Alonso de Revollar, un ascendiente mío por la línea femenina, pasó en su época, y durante la guerra de América,[1] por un consumado diplomático, y sin embargo, esto no dañaba poco ni mucho á su valor, que en ocasiones rayó en temeridad . . .

— ¿Y á qué hora quiere que vaya á buscarle? — preguntó José temiendo con razón que el caballero se descarriase,[2] como solía acontecer.

— Después de comer . . . á la una.

— Pues con su permiso, D. Fernando . . . tengo que componer una red . . .

— Bien, bien, hasta la vista.

Á la hora indicada fué el marinero á la posada del Sr. de Meira: al poco rato salieron juntos y enderezaron los pasos por la calle abajo en dirección de la ribera. Antes de llegar á ella, D. Fernando se detuvo delante de una casa algo más decente que las contiguas.

— Alto; vamos á entrar aquí.

— ¿En casa de D. Cipriano?

— En casa de D. Cipriano.

El Sr. de Meira llamó á la puerta y preguntó si se podía ver al señor juez municipal. La vieja que les salió á abrir, hermana de éste, les dijo que estaba durmiendo la siesta. D. Fernando insistió: era un negocio urgente. La vieja, mal humorada y gruñendo, porque estaba lejos de reconocer en el señor de Meira derechos señoriales, se fué al cabo á despertar á su hermano.

D. Cipriano, á quien ya tenemos el honor de conocer por haberle visto en la tienda de la maestra, los recibió afablemente, aunque mostrando sorpresa.

— ¿Qué hay de nuevo, D. Fernando?

Éste sacó del bolsillo de su raidísima levita un papel, lo desdobló con lentitud académica y lo presentó gravemente al juez.

— Qué es esto?

— Una solicitud[1] de Da. Elisa Vega pidiendo que se la saque del poder de su madre y se la deposite con arreglo á la ley, para contraer matrimonio.

D. Cipriano dió un salto atrás.

— ¿Cómo . . . Elisita . . . la hija de la maestra?

D. Fernando inclinó la cabeza en señal de asentimiento.

El juez municipal se apresuró á coger las gafas de plata que tenía sobre la mesa y á ponérselas, para leer el documento.

La lectura fué larga, porque D. Cipriano, en achaque de letras,[1] se había andado toda su vida con pies de plomo. Mientras duró, José tenía los ojos clavados ansiosamente en él. El señor de Meira se acariciaba distraídamente su luenga perilla blanca.

— ¡ No sospechaba esto! — exclamó el juez levantando al fin la cabeza. — Y á la verdad no puedo menos de[2] confesar que lo siento . . . porque al cabo[3] la maestra y su marido son amigos . . . y van á llevar un disgusto grande . . . ¿ Ha escrito V. esta solicitud, D. Fernando?

— ¿ Está en regla, señor juez? — respondió éste gravemente.

— Sí, señor.

— Pues basta; no hay necesidad de más.

D. Cipriano se puso pálido; después rojo. No había hombre de más extraña susceptibilidad en todo el mundo: una mirada le hería; una palabra le ponía fuera de sí:[4] pensó que D. Fernando había querido darle una lección de delicadeza y se inmutó notablemente.

— Sr. D. Fernando . . . yo no pretendía . . esas palabras . . . me parece . . .

— No ha sido mi ánimo ofender á V., señor juez. Quería solamente hacer constar mis derechos á callarme delante del funcionario . . . Por lo demás, V. es mi amigo hace tiempo y he tenido siempre un gran placer en tenderle mi mano. Basta que V. haya per-

tenecido á los ejércitos de su majestad, para que sea acreedor á la más alta consideración por parte de todos los hombres bien nacidos.

El tono y la actitud con que D. Fernando pronunció estas palabras debía semejar mucho al que usaban en tiempos remotos los nobles al dirigirse á algún miembro del estado llano, cuando éste entró á deliberar con ellos en los negocios del gobierno. Pero D. Cipriano, que no estaba al tanto de[1] estos ademanes puramente históricos, en vez de ofenderse más, se tranquilizó repentinamente.

— Gracias, D. Fernando . . ., muchas gracias. Como yo aprecio tanto á esa familia . . .

— Yo la aprecio también. Pero vamos al caso: Elisa se quiere casar con este muchacho; su madre se lo impide sin razón alguna . . . porque es pobre, tal vez . . . ó tal vez (esto no lo afirmo, lo doy como hipótesis) por no entregar la herencia del difunto Vega, con la cual comercia y se lucra. No hay otro medio que acudir pidiendo protección á la ley; y la muchacha ha acudido.

— Está muy bien. Ahora lo que procede,[2] es que yo vaya á preguntar á la chica si se ratifica en[3] lo que aquí demanda. En caso afirmativo, procederemos al depósito.

— ¿Y cuándo?

— Hoy mismo . . . Esta misma tarde, si VV. quieren.

— Por la tarde, señor juez — apuntó José, — se va á enterar todo el pueblo y habrá un escándalo . . . Si V. quisiera dejarlo para después que oscurezca . . .

— Como quieras; á mí me es igual. Pero te ad-

vierto que es necesaria la presencia del secretario, y está hoy en Peñascosa.

— D. Telesforo estará aquí entre luz y luz[1] — dijo el señor de Meira.

— Entonces no tengo nada que objetar. Al oscurecer les espero á VV.

— Ahora, D. Cipriano — dijo el señor de Meira, inclinándose gravemente, — yo espero que nada se sabrá de lo que ha pasado aquí . . .

— ¿Qué quiere V. decir con eso, D. Fernando? — preguntó el juez, poniéndose otra vez pálido.

D. Fernando sonrió con benevolencia.

— Nada que pueda ofender á V., señor juez . . . Usted es un hombre de honor y no necesita que le recomienden el secreto en los negocios que lo exigen. Quería decir únicamente que en este asunto necesitamos el mayor sigilo; que nadie sospeche nuestro propósito, ni se trasluzca absolutamente nada.

— Eso es otra cosa — repuso D. Cipriano sosegándose.

— Quedamos, pues, en que[2] después que anochezca nos espera V., ¿no es eso?

— Sí, señor.

— Hasta la vista, entonces.

El prócer alargó su mano al representante del tercer estamento.

— Adiós, D. Fernando: adiós, José.

Así que cerró la noche, una noche de Agosto calurosa y estrellada, D. Fernando, D. Telesforo (que había llegado oportunamente pocos momentos antes) y José, se dirigieron otra vez á casa del juez: subió D. Telesforo únicamente: aguardaron á la puerta el

noble y el marinero: al poco rato salió D. Cipriano acompañado de cerca por su notable bastón[1] con puño de oro y borlas, y algo más lejos por el secretario del juzgado. Los cuatro, después de cambiar un saludo amical en tono de falsete, enderezaron los pasos silenciosamente por la calle arriba en dirección á la casa del maestro.

Las tabernas estaban, como siempre á tal hora, atestadas de gente: por sus puertas abiertas se escapaba la luz y rumor confuso y desagradable de voces y juramentos: nuestros amigos se alejaban de ellas cuanto podían para no ser notados. El pobre José iba temblando de miedo: él, tan sereno y tan bravo ante los golpes de mar, sentía encogérsele el corazón y doblársele las piernas al imaginar cómo se pondría la maestra viéndose burlada. Más de veinte veces estuvo para huir,[2] dejar que aquellos señores desempeñasen su tarea solos; pero siempre le detenía la idea de que Elisa iba á necesitar de su presencia para animarse. ¿Cómo estaría la pobrecilla en aquel momento? Al preguntarse esto José tomaba fuerzas y seguía caminando quedo en pos de los tres ancianos.

Cuando llegaron frente á la casa de la maestra, el juez se detuvo y les dijo bajando cuanto pudo la voz:

— Ahora voy á entrar yo solamente con D. Telesforo. Usted, D. Fernando, puede quedarse con José cerca de la puerta, por si hacen falta para dar valor á la chica.

Asintió el marinero de todo corazón, pues en aquel instante podía ahogársele con un cabello. D. Cipriano y D. Telesforo se apartaron de ellos; la luz de la tienda

les iluminó por un momento: entraron. Un estremecimiento de susto y pavor sacudió fuertemente el cuerpo de José.

XIV

En la tienda de la maestra se habían congregado, como todas las noches á primera hora,[1] unos cuantos marineros y algunas mujerucas, que rendían parias á la riqueza y á la importancia de la señá Isabel: estaban además el cabo de mar y un maragato que traficaba con el escabeche. La tertulia se mantenía silenciosa y pendiente de los labios del venerable D. Claudio, el cual, sentado detrás del mostrador en un antiguo sillón de baqueta,[2] leía en alta voz á la luz del velón por[3] un libro manoseado y grasiento.

Era costumbre entre ellos solazarse en las noches de invierno con la lectura de alguna novela: las mujeres, particularmente, gozaban mucho siguiendo sus peripecias dolorosas. Porque era siempre una historia tristísima la que se narraba, y si no los tertulianos se aburrían: una esposa abandonada de su marido, que á fuerza de paciencia y dulzura consigue traerle de nuevo á sus brazos; las aventuras de un niño expósito, que al fin resulta hijo de un duque ó cosa que lo valga;[4] los trabajos de dos enamorados á quienes la suerte persigue cruelmente muchos años. Había dos ó tres docenas de estas novelas en Rodillero, que habían dado ya varias veces la vuelta al pueblo,[5] siempre con el mismo éxito lisonjero y con un poquito más de grasa cada día en sus folios: todas « concluían bien: » era requi-

sito indispensable. D. Claudio, que era muy sensible á las desgracias narradas y solía llorar con[1] ellas, cuando estaba constipado[2] nunca dejaba de proponer que se leyese, con objeto de desahogar un poco la cabeza.

Titulábase la novela que ahora tenía entre las manos, *Maclovia y Federico, ó las minas del Tirol:* era una relación conmovedora de las desdichas de dos amantes que, habiendo nacido en egregia cuna, por el rigor de sus padres se ven precisados á ganarse el sustento con las manos. Federico y Maclovia se casan en secreto: el padre de ésta, que es un príncipe de malísimas pulgas,[3] los persigue: huyen ellos, y Federico entra de bracero en una mina; su joven esposa le sigue con admirable valor; tienen un hijo; padecen mil dolores é injusticias: al fin el príncipe se ablanda y los redime de tanta desgracia, llevándolos en triunfo á su palacio. Las mujerucas, y hasta los hombres, estaban sumamente interesados y ansiaban saber en qué paraba.[4] De vez en cuando alguna de aquéllas exclamaba en tono lastimero:

—¡Ay, pobrecita mía; cuánto pasó![5]

La compasión era siempre para el elemento femenino de la obra.

La señá Isabel cosía como de costumbre detrás del mostrador al lado de su fiel esposo; no parecía muy apenada por las desgracias de los jóvenes amantes. Elisa también estaba sentada cosiendo; pero á menudo se levantaba de la silla con distintos pretextos, descubriendo cierta inquietud que desde luego[6] llamó la atención de la sagaz maestra.

—¡Pero muchacha, hoy tienes azogue![7]

No azogue, sino miedo y muy grande tenía la pobre.

¡Cuántas veces se arrepintió de haber cedido á los ruegos de José! Pensando en lo que iba á suceder aquella noche, sentía escalofríos; el corazón le bailaba dentro del pecho con tal celeridad, que se extrañaba de que los demás no lo advirtiesen. Había rezado ya á todos los santos del cielo y les había prometido mil sacrificios si la sacaban con bien[1] de aquel aprieto. — ¡Dios mío — solía decirse, — que no vengan! — Y á cada instante dirigía miradas de terror á la puerta. La señá Isabel observó que unas veces estaba descolorida, y otras roja como una amapola.

— Oyes, Elisa; tú estás enferma....

— Sí, madre; me siento mal — repuso ella vislumbrando con alegría la idea de marcharse.

— Pues anda, vete á la cama... será principio de un constipado.

La joven no lo quiso ver mejor,[2] y soltando la obra que tenía en las manos, desapareció rápidamente por la puertecilla de la trastienda. Subió la escalera á saltos como si huyese de un peligro inminente; pero al llegar á la sala quedó petrificada oyendo en la tienda la voz de D. Cipriano.

En efecto, éste y D. Telesforo entraban en aquel instante.

— Buenas noches, señores.

— Buenas noches — contestaron todos.

La maestra quedó muy sorprendida, porque D. Telesforo hacía bastante tiempo que estaba reñido con ella y no frecuentaba la tienda. Después de un momento de silencio algo embarazoso, D. Cipriano preguntó con amabilidad:

— ¿Y Elisita?

— Ahora se ha ido á la cama: se siente un poco mal — repuso la señá Isabel.

— Pues necesito hablar con ella dos palabritas — replicó el juez apelando siempre[1] á los diminutivos.

La maestra se puso terriblemente pálida, porque adivinó la verdad.

— Bueno, la llamaré — dijo con voz opaca[2] levantándose de la silla.

— No es necesario que V. la moleste; yo subiré, si es que no se ha acostado.

— Subiremos cuando V. quiera . . .

El juez extendió la mano como para detenerla, diciendo:

— Permítame V., señora Isabel . . . El negocio que vamos á tratar es reservado[3] . . . El único que debe subir conmigo es D. Telesforo.

La maestra le clavó una mirada siniestra: D. Cipriano se puso un poco colorado.

— Yo lo siento mucho, señora, pero es necesario . . .

Y por no sufrir más tiempo los ojos de la vieja, se apresuró á subir á la casa,[4] seguido del secretario.

El venerable D. Claudio, prodigiosamente afectado con aquella escena, dejó caer al suelo á la desdichada *Maclovia*, y ya no se acordó de recogerla. Abría los ojos de tal modo, mirando á su mujer, que era un milagro del cielo el que no se le escapasen de las órbitas.[5] La maestra, inmóvil, clavada al suelo en el mismo sitio en que la había dejado D. Cipriano, no perdía de vista la puerta por donde éste había salido.

— Vamos — dijo al fin con ira concentrada, pasándose la mano por el rostro; — la niña está en el celo;[6] hay que casarla á escape.[7]

—¿Cómo casarla?—preguntó D. Claudio.

Su mujer le echó una mirada de desprecio, y volviéndose á los circunstantes que estaban pasmados sin saber lo que era aquello, añadió:

—¿Qué; no se han enterado VV. todavía?... Pues está bien claro; que ese perdido de la viuda necesita cuartos, y quiere llevarme á Elisa.

José oyó perfectamente estas palabras, y se estremeció como si le hubiesen pinchado. D. Fernando trató de sosegarlo, poniéndole una mano sobre el hombro; pero él mismo estaba muy lejos de hallarse tranquilo; por más que se atusase[1] gravemente su luenga perilla blanca hasta arrancársela, la procesión le andaba por dentro.[2]

—Yo creía—dijo uno de los tertulios—que eso había concluído hacía ya mucho tiempo.

—En la apariencia sí—contestó la maestra;—pero ya ven VV. cómo se las ha arreglado[3] ese borrachín para engatusarla otra vez.

—Pero ese es un acto de rebelión por parte de Elisa, que merece un castigo ejemplar—saltó D. Claudio.—Yo la encerraría en la bodega y la tendría quince días á pan y agua.

—Y yo te encerraría á ti en la cuadra por borrico—dijo la señá Isabel, descargando sobre su consorte el fardo de cólera que la abrumaba.

—¡Mujer!... esa severidad...¿á qué conduce?.. Me parece que te ha cegado la pasión en este momento.

El rostro del maestro, al proferir estas palabras, reflejaba la indignación y el miedo á un mismo tiempo, y guardaba, aunque no esté bien el decirlo, más semejanza que nunca con el de un perro dogo.

Su esposa, sin hacerle caso alguno, siguió hablando con aparente calma.

— ¡ Vaya, ya se le contentó el antojo á la viuda ! . . . Hay que alegrarse, porque si no, el día menos pensado se queda en un patatús.[1]

— ¡ Pero quién había de decir que una chica tan buena como Elisa ! . . . — exclamó una de las mujerucas.

— Á la pobre le han llenado la cabeza de viento — dijo la maestra. — Se figura que hay en casa torres y montones y que todos son de ella . . . ¡ No se van á llevar mal chasco ella y su galán ![2]

— Señora Isabel — dijo el juez, que bajaba en aquel momento, — Elisa ha solicitado el depósito para casarse y acaba de ratificarse en su petición . . . No me queda más remedio que decretarlo . . . Siento en el alma darle este disgusto . . . pero la ley . . . yo no puedo menos . . .

La maestra, después de mirarle fijamente, hizo un gesto despreciativo con los labios.

— No se disguste V., D. Cipriano, que va á enfermar.[3]

Una ola formidable de sangre subió al rostro del susceptible funcionario.

— Señora, tenga V. presente[4] con quien habla.

— Con el hijo de Pepa la panadera — dijo ella, bajando la voz y volviéndole la espalda.

El capitán D. Cipriano era hijo, en efecto, de una humilde panadera y había ascendido desde soldado:[5] no era de los que ocultasen su origen ni se creía deshonrado por esto; mas el tono de desprecio con que la maestra pronunció aquellas palabras, le hirió tan profundamente, que no pudo articular ninguna. Después

de mover varias veces los labios sin producir sonido alguno, al fin rompió, diciendo en voz temblorosa:

—Cállese V., mala lengua ... ó por vida de Dios, que la llevo á V. á la cárcel.

La maestra no contestó, temiendo sin duda que el juez exasperado cumpliese la amenaza: se contentó con reirse frente á sus tertulios.

D. Cipriano, repuesto de su emoción dolorosa, ó convaleciente por lo menos, dijo con acento imperativo:

—Á ver ... designe V. la persona que ha de encargarse de su hija mientras permanezca en depósito.

La maestra volvió la cabeza, le miró otra vez con desdén y se puso á cantar frente á sus amigas:

Tan tarantán, los higos son verdes.

Viendo lo cual D. Cipriano, dijo con más imperio aún:

—Venga V. acá, D. Telesforo ... Certifique usted ahora mismo que la señora no ha querido designar persona que se encargue de tener á su hija en casa mientras esté depositada.

Después de dar esta orden, salió de la tienda y se fué al portal: allí estaba Elisa á oscuras y temblando de miedo. Cuando hubo hablado con ella algunas palabras, volvió á entrar.

—En uso de la facultad que la ley me concede, designo á Da. Rafaela Morán, madrina de la interesada, para que la tenga en su poder hasta que cese el depósito.

Mientras D. Telesforo extendía estas diligencias,[1] los marineros y las mujerucas comenzaron á consolar á la señá Isabel y á poner infinitos comentarios y glo-

sas á la escena que se estaba efectuando: repuestos de la sorpresa que les había producido, se les desató la lengua de forma que[1] la tienda parecía un gallinero.

—¡Pero cómo se atrevería esa chica á dar un paso semejante! — decía uno.

— Después de todo, ¿qué se va á hacer?... Hay que tomarlo con calma, señá Isabel... — decía una vieja que no le pesaba nada[2] del disgusto que la maestra padecía.

— Por mí, si estuviera en su lugar — decía otra á quien le pesaba mucho menos — no me disgustaría poco ni mucho[3]... Que la niña se quiere marchar de casa... ¡Vaya bendita de Dios!... Con darle lo que es suyo, estamos en paz.[4]

La maestra la echó una rápida mirada de ira. La vieja sonrió con el borde de los labios:[5] ya sabía que había herido en lo más vivo.

— Lo peor de todo es el ejemplo, D. Claudio — dijo el maragato.

— Tiene V. razón, ¡el ejemplo! ¡el ejemplo! — exclamó aquél elevando al cielo los ojos y las manos.

— Á mí me daba en la nariz[6] que Elisa tenía algún secreto — apuntó un marinero anciano. — Por dos veces la ví hablando con D. Fernando de Meira, camino del[7] monte de San Esteban, y noté que en cuanto me atisbaron[8] echaron á correr, uno para un lado y otro para otro.

— Pues otra cosa me pasó á mí — dijo el cabo de mar. — Iba una tarde hacia Peñascosa, y á poco más de media milla de aquí me encontré á D. Fernando, en gran conversación con Elisa, y noté que acababa de separarse de ellos la viuda de Ramón de la Puente.

—¡Ya me parecía que aquí había de andar la mano del señor de la gran casa de Meira!—exclamó la maestra.

Oyendo aquel insulto, D. Fernando no pudo contenerse y entró como un huracán por la puerta de la tienda, con las mejillas pálidas y los ojos centellantes.

—¡Oiga V., grandísima pendeja; enjuáguese V. la boca antes de hablar de la casa de Meira!

—¡No lo dije yo!—exclamó la maestra soltando al mismo tiempo una carcajada estridente.—¡Ya pareció el marqués de los calzones rotos!—Y encarándose con él, añadió sarcásticamente:—¿Cuántos zoquetes de pan le han dado, señor marqués, por encargarse de este negocio?

Los tertulios rieron. El pobre caballero quedó anonadado; la cólera y la indignación se le subieron á la garganta, y en poco estuvo que no le ahogasen;[1] comprendió que era imposible luchar con la desvergüenza y procacidad de aquella mujer, y se salió de la tienda pálido y convulso. Pero la maestra, viendo que se le escapaba la presa, le gritó:

—¡Ande V., pobretón! Le habrán llenado la panza para servir de pantalla, ¿verdad? Ande, váyase y no vuelva, ¡gorrón! ¡pegote! ¡chupón!

El noble señor de Meira, al recibir por la espalda aquella granizada de injurias, se volvió, agitó los puños y tuvo fuerzas para preguntar:

—¿Pero no hay quien clave un hierro candente en la lengua á esa infame mujer?

Al decir esto recordaba, sin duda, los terribles castigos que sus antepasados infligían á los villanos inso-

lentes. Pero en la tienda, estas aterradoras palabras fueron acogidas con una risotada general.

D. Telesforo, en tanto,[1] había concluido de escribir. El juez, cada vez más ofendido con la maestra, dijo al secretario:

— Haga V. el favor de notificar á la madre de la joven que debe entregar la cama y la ropa de su uso.

— Yo no entrego nada, porque lo que hay en casa es mío — dijo la vieja poniéndose seria.

— Dígale V. á la señora — continuó el juez, dirigiéndose á D. Telesforo, — que eso ya se verá: por lo pronto,[2] que entregue la cama y la ropa que la ley concede á la depositada.

— Pues yo no entrego nada.

— ¡Pues se lo tomaremos! — exclamó D. Cipriano exasperado. — Á ver: dos de VV. que vengan conmigo á servir de testigos...

Y señalando á un par de marineros, les obligó á subir con él al cuarto de Elisa. Ésta sollozaba en el portal escuchando con terror los atroces insultos que á ella, á su novio y á la familia de éste lanzaba su madre dando vueltas[3] por la tienda como una fiera.

Al cabo de un instante bajó D. Cipriano.

— Elisa, sube conmigo á señalar tu ropa.

— ¡Por Dios, señor juez! Déjeme V. por Dios! No quiero llevarme nada...

D. Cipriano, respetando el dolor de la joven y su delicadeza, no quiso insistir. Pero se fué á la calle en busca de José, le llevó arriba y le hizo cargar con la ropa y la cama de Elisa. Después sacó á ésta del portal, la colocó entre D. Fernando de Meira y él, y se dirigieron á casa de la madrina escoltados por el secre-

tario y algunas mujeres y marineros que se habían juntado á la puerta de la tienda. José marchaba delante trotando con su grata carga.

XV

Trascurrieron los tres meses que la ley señala para esperar el consejo paterno: no se pasaron tan alegres como podía presumirse. Elisa no estaba contenta en casa de su madrina: era una vieja egoísta é impertinente que no cesaba en todo el día de reñir con las gallinas, con el cerdo y con los gatos. Acostumbrada á este gruñir y rezar constante, pronto consideró á su ahijada como uno de tantos animales domésticos, y le prodigó los mismos discursos: de vez en cuando le echaba en cara directa ó indirectamente el favor que la hacía; favor que la joven había prometido pagar cuando estuviese en posesión de sus bienes. Además, la rebelión contra su madre la traía pesarosa;[1] sentía remordimientos; lloraba á menudo; más de una vez se sintió tentada á volverse á casa, echarse á los pies de señá Isabel y pedirla perdón. José la sostenía con su pasión enérgica y dulce á la par[2] en estos momentos de flaqueza, tan propios en una hija buena y sencilla. No salía apenas á la calle: sólo á la hora del oscurecer, cuando su novio venía de la mar, hablaba algunos cortos instantes con él á la puerta de casa, delante de su madrina, quien no se alejaba un punto de ellos, más por el gusto de estorbarles, que para guardar á su ahijada. Tal vez que otra, muy rara,[3] salían de paseo los tres por algún camino extraviado, de suerte que nadie los

viese: la inocente muchacha imaginaba que su conducta era juzgada severamente en Rodillero, y que todos la reprobaban. No era verdad: los vecinos del lugar, sin faltar uno, hallaban justificada su resolución, y se habían alegrado no poco de ella: la maestra era generalmente odiada.

Hubo un suceso también que les impresionó dolorosamente, lo mismo á ella que á José, y que hizo bastante ruido en el pueblo. D. Fernando de la casa de Meira había desaparecido de Rodillero pocos días después de haberse depositado á Elisa; de nadie se despidió, y nadie supo á dónde se había dirigido: todas las indagaciones que se hicieron para averiguar su paradero, fueron infructuosas. José experimentó un gran disgusto: precisamente tenía ya ahorrados de la costera del bonito cerca de tres mil reales que pensaba darle en seguida á cuenta de los diez mil que de él había recibido, figurándose, no sin razón, que los dineros con que se había quedado[1] de los catorce mil que D. Anacleto le había pagado por la casa, andarían muy cerca de concluirse. Volvíase loco pensando que acaso hostigado por la necesidad, y no queriendo de vergüenza pedirle nada, se habría huido por el mundo[2] el buen caballero á quien tantos favores debía. Salió expeditamente él mismo en su busca, abandonando para ello lancha y trabajo; pero después de recorrer durante cuatro días todos los contornos y haber extendido la excursión á varios puntos distantes de la provincia preguntando en todos los parajes, vióse necesitado á regresar sin saber nada. Esto le tenía muy apesadumbrado.

La costera del bonito había sido tan buena aquel año

como el anterior: la lancha que José había comprado á un armador vizcaíno, trabajó admirablemente todo el verano: la compaña, en la cual figuraban como antes el satírico Bernardo y el tremendo Corsario, estaba contentísima, no sólo por las ganancias que percibía, sino por ver al pobre José, á quien todos apreciaban de veras, al cabo de sus desgracias y en vísperas de ser feliz. Repetíase sin notables variantes lo que pasaba en el comienzo de esta historia: Bernardo embromaba á sus compañeros, y en particular al Corsario, con faramallas divertidas como la de la piedra de marras:[1] José no salía tampoco ileso de ellas. Á menudo le preguntaba: — ¿Pero cuándo vemos esa comedia, muchacho? Mira tú que se van á marchar los cómicos. — Todos estaban al tanto de lo que aquello significaba, y reían, recordando la promesa que José les había hecho el año anterior, de darles dinero el día de su matrimonio para ir á Sarrió á ver una función de teatro. La única diferencia, y de ello no les pesaba nada, era que este año había mucha sardina: los viejos, mientras ellos corrían por la altura aferrando bonitos, se mantenían cerca de la costa, con las barcas chicas, y mañana y tarde solían volver á casa cargados de pescado. En pocos meses había entrado mucho dinero en el pueblo: las fábricas de escabeche funcionaban noche y día; no se veían por la calle sino maragatos y carros atestados de barriles. El cuerno de la abundancia se había vaciado de golpe sobre Rodillero; y, como sucedía siempre en tales casos, en vez de separar una parte de las ganancias para comer en los días de miseria, todas se invertían en las tabernas y en el mercado. Entre los pescadores no se conoce apenas el ahorro;

pero hay disculpa para ello: el peligro constante en que viven les arranca la facultad de prever, que tan desarrollada está entre los campesinos; el trabajo rudo y sombrío á que se entregan les hace apetecer con ansia los momentos de expansión y la alegría ruidosa que el vino comunica.

Sucedió lo que era de esperar: en pos de los bienes, los males. Terminada la costera del bonito, y también casi dando las boqueadas[1] la de la sardina, quedaron las lanchas paradas algún tiempo esperando la merluza y el congrio. Los marineros, durante este tiempo de holganza, vivían en las tabernas ó se paseaban en pandillas, según su costumbre, por las riberas de la mar escrutando y dando su opinión sobre las velas que cruzaban por el horizonte. En estos días se comieron lo que les restaba de los pingües quiñones del verano.

Pero el invierno no se presentó benigno. Cuando empezaron á salir al congrio y la merluza, volvían la mayor parte de los días sin nada ó con muy poco pescado. Además, en varias ocasiones sintieron algunos latigazos del Noroeste, que les puso en cuidado. Dejaron entonces de pescar, y aguardaron que llegase la época propicia para el besugo. El mes de Diciembre siguió aún más rudo y tornadizo[2] que el de Noviembre; mas como no había otro remedio que ir á la mar, bajo pena de morirse de hambre ó salir á pedir limosna por las aldeas, cosa que solamente hacían en el último aprieto, comenzaron á trabajar en la pesca del besugo, aunque recelosos y prevenidos para cualquier evento. El tiempo fué de mal en peor: algunos días serenos llegaban que les hacían concebir esperanzas de mejoría; pero al instante se cambiaba y volvía á mostrarse

con cariz feo y huraño.[1] Cierta especie propalada por el lugar les infundió aún más recelo: se decía que un muchacho había visto varias noches salir de la ribera tres de las lanchas, tripuladas por hombres vestidos de blanco, y que al cabo de dos ó tres horas las veía entrar de nuevo solas. No es fácil representarse el terror que esta noticia produjo en el pueblo, sobre todo entre las mujeres: los hombres también estaban tristes y medrosos, pero lo disimulaban.

Á la general tristeza que en el pueblo reinaba, y de la cual participaban, no en pequeña porción, Elisa y José, se añadió para éstos una desgracia que les conmovió hondamente: se supo de modo evidente[2] que D. Fernando de Meira había sido encontrado muerto en un camino de sierra, allá hacia la montaña[3] de León. Se dió por supuesto[4] entre los vecinos que el caballero iría[5] á buscar dinero á réditos[6] por la noche, según su costumbre, y se habría matado[7] de una caída; pero algunos, sin respeto á la memoria del comendador de Villaplana, del procurador de las Cortes de Toro, del presidente del Consejo de Italia y del oidor de la Audiencia de Méjico, aseguraban que D. Fernando iba pidiendo limosna y se había muerto de hambre y de frío. Sea de esto lo que quiera,[8] su muerte causó en todo el pueblo triste impresión, porque era universalmente querido. Elisa le lloró como á un padre, y José anduvo muchos días caviloso[9] y taciturno. Pero al cabo, los preparativos de boda consiguieron secar las lágrimas de ambos y ocupar exclusivamente su atención. Habían pensado casarse en los primeros días de Diciembre; mas no fué posible por algunas dificultades que el cura puso y necesitaron vencer; y también por-

que no hallaron casa. José no quería de modo alguno vivir con su madre, pues conociéndole el genio, sabía que Elisa iba á tener disgustos, por más que aquélla ya la amase entrañablemente. Quedó aplazado el matrimonio para año nuevo. Los preliminares, tan sabrosos siempre para los enamorados, no lo fueron tanto en esta ocasión por las particulares circunstancias en que se hallaban y por la atmósfera de tristeza que pesaba sobre el pueblo.

El tiempo vino tan recio[1] y la desconfianza de la marinería era tanta, que reunidos los patrones de las lanchas, acordaron velar todas las noches tres de ellos, para reconocer atentamente el estado de la mar y del cielo, y en vista de sus observaciones, decidir si se había de llamar á la gente ó no. Además, como generalmente se salía antes de amanecer, se previno que la lancha que saliese primero ó fuese delante pusiese una luz en la proa, en caso de que hallase peligroso el continuar, la cual serviría de señal á las otras para volverse al puerto. Dos noches antes del suceso que vamos á narrar le tocó á José hacer la guardia con otros dos; vieron malo el cariz y no quisieron avisar. Pero como hacía ya algunos días que estaba la pesca parada y comenzaba á dejarse sentir el hambre, algunos murmuraron en la taberna de esta determinación; el día había mejorado un poco, aunque no mucho. Por la noche se quedaron de vela otros tres patrones, los cuales vacilaron mucho tiempo antes de dar al muchacho la orden de *revolver*,[2] porque el semblante era feo y sucio como pocas veces; mas al fin la dieron, pensando en la miseria de la gente ó temiendo acaso las murmuraciones.

José fué uno de los primeros que llegaron á la ribera.

—¡Ave María, qué barbaridad![1] —exclamó, mirando al cielo. —¡Vaya una noche que han escogido para salir á la mar!

Pero era demasiado prudente para alarmar á sus compañeros, y demasiado bravo para negarse á salir. Se calló, y ayudado de sus compañeros botó al agua la lancha: como estaba la más próxima, quedó á flote y aparejada la primera. En cuanto la compaña estuvo á bordo, comenzaron á bogar. Eran más hombres que en el verano, lo cual sucede siempre, tanto porque en el invierno la gente no se reparte en otras faenas, cuanto porque á causa de las frecuentes calmas, es preciso que haya bastantes remos en las lanchas. En la de José iban catorce.

Después que se hubieron apartado del puerto una milla, José dió la orden de izar vela. Las lanchas asturianas llevan siempre cinco, que son por orden de magnitud: la *mayor,* la *cebadera,* el *trinquete,* el *borriquete* y la *unción,*[2] las cuales se combinan diversamente según la fuerza del viento: la *unción,* que es la más pequeña, lleva este nombre terrible, porque se iza sola cuando están á punto de perecer.

—¿Qué izamos, José? —preguntó uno.

—Los trinquetes —respondió éste secamente.

Los marineros pusieron la cebadera en el medio y el trinquete en la proa, pues tal era lo que la orden significaba.

La noche estaba oscura, pero no encapotada; el cielo se mostraba despejado á ratos; las nubes negras y redondas corrían con extraña velocidad, lo cual manifestaba claramente que el viento soplaba huracanado arriba, por más que abajo no se hubiese aún dejado sentir

con fuerza. Esto tenía sumamente inquieto y preocupado á José, quien no apartaba la vista del cielo. Iban todos silenciosos y tristes; el frío les paralizaba las manos, y el temor, que no podían ocultar, la lengua; echaban también frecuentes miradas al firmamento, por donde corrían cada vez con más furia las nubes; la mar estaba gruesa y sospechosa.

Así caminaron un cuarto de hora, hasta que José rompió de súbito el silencio lanzando una interjección.

— . . . ¡Esto es una porquería! ¡Hoy no salen á la mar ni los perros!

Tres ó cuatro marineros se apresuraron á decir:

— Tienes razón. — Es un tiempo cochino. — Está bueno para los cerdos, no para los hombres.

— Por nosotros, José — concluyó diciendo uno, — no sigas adelante . . . Si te parece, da la vuelta[1] . . .

José no respondió: siguió callado unos minutos hasta que, levantándose de pronto, dice en tono resuelto:

— Muchacho, enciende ese farol . . . Á cambiar.[2]

El rapaz encendió el farol, y lo colocó en la proa con visible satisfacción. Los marineros ejecutaron la maniobra, satisfechos también, aunque sin mostrarlo.

La lancha comenzó á navegar orzada hacia Rodillero. Al instante vieron encendidas, allá á lo lejos, unas después de otras, las luces de todas las lanchas. Esto significaba que todas habían visto la señal y se volvían al puerto.

— ¡Si no podía menos![3] — dijo uno.

— ¡Quién va con ganas á la mar hoy! — dijo otro.

— Pero esos borricos de Nicolás y Toribio, ¿por qué mandaron revolver?

Se les había desatado la lengua á todos. Mas des-

pués de caminar un rato hablando, observó José por sotavento el bulto de una lancha que pasaba no muy lejos de la suya, sin luz en la proa.

— Alto, muchachos — dijo. — ¿Qué diablos es esto? ¿Á dónde va esa lancha?

— Pregunta.

El patrón se puso en pie y haciendo con las manos una bocina, gritó:

— ¡Ah de la lancha![1]

— ¿Qué quieres, José? — contestó el de la otra, que le conoció por la voz.

— ¿Á dónde vas, Hermenegildo? — preguntó José, que también le había conocido.

— Á la playa — repuso el otro acercándose cuanto pudo.

— ¿Pero no habéis encendido los faroles después que yo lo puse?[2]

— Sí, pero conozco muy bien á este pueblo: te habrán enseñado los faroles, sin hacer maldito el caso[3]... ¿Cuánto me apuestas á que todos los barcos amanecen hoy[4] en la playa?

— ¡Malditos envidiosos! — exclamó José por lo bajo, y dirigiéndose á la tripulación: — Á cambiar otra vez... El día menos pensado va á haber una desgracia por estas cicaterías...

Los marineros ejecutaron la maniobra de mal humor.

— ¿No te dije muchas veces, José — apuntó Bernardo, — que en este pueblo cualquiera se queda tuerto porque el vecino ciegue?[5]

El patrón no contestó.

— Lo gracioso[6] es — observó otro — que esos ba-

biecas piensan que van á engañarse, cuando aquí al que más y al que menos, le duelen los riñones de saber con qué bueyes ara.[1]

— La risa será cuando nos veamos todos, así que amanezca — añadió un tercero.

— Ya veréis si cualquier día sucede algo — dijo otra vez José, — cómo[2] no ha de faltar á quien echar la culpa.

— Eso siempre — repuso Bernardo con gravedad cómica.

Después de estas palabras reinó silencio en la lancha. Los marineros contemplaban taciturnos el horizonte: el patrón observaba cuidadosamente el cariz y se mostraba cada vez más inquieto, apesar de que hubo un instante en que el cielo apareció despejado casi por entero. Pero no tardó en cubrirse de nuevo. Sin embargo, el viento no soplaba duro sino arriba: hacia el amanecer también aquí se calmó. La aurora fué triste y sucia como pocas: la luz se filtraba con enorme trabajo por una triple capa de nubes.

Cuando llegaron á la playa, vieron en efecto á casi todas las lanchas de Rodillero que ya habían echado al agua las cuerdas y pescaban no muy lejos unas de otras. Hicieron ellos otro tanto[3] después de arriar las velas, y metieron á bordo durante dos horas algunos besugos; no muchos. Á eso de las diez se ennegreció más el cielo y cayó un chubasco que arrastró consigo un poco de viento: á la media hora vino otro y el viento sopló más fuerte. Entonces algunas lanchas recogieron los aparejos, é izaron vela poniendo la proa á tierra: las demás, unas primero y otras después, siguieron el ejemplo.

— Para este viaje no necesitábamos alforjas — dijo un compañero de José, amarrando de mal humor el puño del borriquete[1] á la proa.

Estaban á unas diez ó doce leguas de la costa. Antes de haberse acercado dos millas á ella, vieron que el cielo se ennegrecía fuertemente hacia el Oeste: fué tal la negrura, que los marineros se miraron unos á otros despavoridos.

— ¡ Madre del alma, lo que allí viene! — exclamó uno.

José había mandado desde el principio, por precaución, izar los borriquetes, esto es, el trinquete en el medio y el borriquete á proa. Miró fijamente al Oeste: la negrura se iba acercando rápidamente. Cuando sintió en el rostro el fresco que precede al chubasco, se puso en pie gritando:

— ¡ Arriar en banda escotas y drizas![2]

Los marineros, sin darse cuenta tan cabal del peligro, se apresuraron, no obstante, á obedecer. Las velas cayeron pesadamente sobre los bancos: y fué bien á punto,[3] porque una ráfaga violentísima cruzó silbando por los palos y empujó con fuerza el casco de la embarcación. Los marineros dirigieron una mirada á José, que era un voto de gracias y confianza.

— ¡ Cómo has olido el trallazo recondenado![4] — dijo uno.

Pero al dirigir la vista al mar, observaron que una de las lanchas había zozobrado: otra vez volvieron los rostros á José, pálidos como difuntos.

— ¿Has visto, José? — le preguntó uno con voz ronca y temblorosa.

El patrón cerró los ojos en señal de afirmación.

Pero el rapaz que estaba á proa, al enterarse de lo que había ocurrido, comenzó á lamentarse á voces.

—¡Ay Virgen Santísima! ¿qué va á ser[1] de nosotros? ¡Madre mía! ¿qué va á ser de nosotros?

José, encarándose con él, los ojos centelleantes de cólera, gritó:

—¡Silencio, cochino, ó te echo al agua ahora mismo!

El chiquillo, asustado, se calló.

— Traed[2] el borriquete al medio y la unción á proa — ordenó después.

Así se hizo rápidamente: José arribó[3] cuanto pudo, teniendo cuidado de no perder la línea de Rodillero: la lancha comenzó á navegar con extraordinaria velocidad, porque el viento soplaba impetuoso y cada vez más recio. No se pasaron muchos minutos sin que se levantase una formidable marejada ó mar del viento, que les impidió ver el rumbo de las otras lanchas: á intervalos cortos llovía copiosamente. La salsa les incomodaba bastante y fué necesario que varios hombres se empleasen constantemente en achicar el agua; pero José atendía más al viento que á ésta: soplaba tan desigual y traidoramente, que al menor descuido estaba seguro de zozobrar: otras dos veces se vió precisado á arriar de golpe las velas para eludir la catástrofe. Últimamente, viendo la imposibilidad de navegar con dos velas, mandó izar sola la unción. Los marineros le miraban consternados; á varios de ellos les temblaban las manos al ejecutar la maniobra.

— Hay que arribar del todo — dijo José, con la voz ronca ya por los gritos que había dado. — No podemos entrar en Rodillero. Entraremos en Sarrió.

— Me parece que ni en Sarrió tampoco — repuso un viejo por lo bajo.

— Nada de amilanarse,[1] muchachos: ¡ánimo, que esto no es nada! — replicó el patrón con energía.

Desde el momento en que se resignaron á no entrar en Rodillero y pusieron la popa al viento, éste ya no dió cuidado, máxime llevando tan poquísimo trapo. Pero el mar comenzaba á inspirar mucho miedo: la marejada, ayudada de la mar gruesa de la noche, se había convertido en verdadera mar de fondo, terrible é imponente. Los golpes que recibían por la popa eran tan fuertes y continuados, que al fin hubo necesidad de orzar un poco, presentando el costado á las olas: de otra suerte corrían peligro inminente de que la lancha se anegase: así y todo,[2] muchos de ellos no cesaban de achicar agua. El movimiento de ésta seguía aumentando; las olas eran cada vez más altas; la lancha desaparecía debajo de ellas y por milagro volvía á salir. Uno de los golpes les llevó el timón: José tomó apresuradamente el que tenía de reserva; pero al engancharlo, otro golpe se lo arrancó de las manos y metió dos ó tres pipas de agua á bordo.

El rapaz volvió á exclamar sollozando:

— ¡Ay, madre de mi alma, estamos perdidos!

José le arrojó la caña del timón, que había quedado sobre el banco, á la cabeza.

— ¡Cállate, ladrón, ó te mato!

Y viendo en los rostros de algunos compañeros señales de terror, les dijo echándoles una mirada feroz:

— ¡Al que me dé un grito, le retuerzo el pescuezo!

Aquella ferocidad era necesaria: si el pánico se apo-

deraba de la compaña y dejaba un instante de achicar, se iban á pique sin remedio.

Para sustituir al timón, puso un remo en la popa. Con las velas izadas, es de todo punto[1] imposible gobernar con el remo; pero como no llevaban más que la unción, pudo, á costa de grandes esfuerzos, sujetar la lancha. Cada golpe que recibían, metía una cantidad extraordinaria de agua á bordo; y apesar de que un hombre, trabajando bien, puede achicar con el balde una pipa en ocho ó diez minutos, era imposible echarla toda fuera; les llegaba casi siempre cerca de la rodilla. José no cesaba un momento de gritar, con la poca voz que le quedaba:

— ¡ Achicar, muchachos, achicar! ¡ Ánimo, muchachos! . . . ¡ achicar, achicar!

Una oleada llevó la boína á Bernardo.

— ¡ Anda — dijo éste con rabia, — que pronto irá la cabeza!

La situación era angustiosa: aunque procuraban disimularlo, el terror se había apoderado de todos igualmente. Entonces José, viendo que las fuerzas les iban á faltar muy pronto, les dijo:

— Muchachos, estamos corriendo un temporal deshecho;[2] ¿ queréis que acudamos al Santo Cristo de Rodillero para que nos saque de él?

— Sí, José — contestaron todos con una precipitación que mostraba la congoja de su espíritu.

— Pues bien; le ofreceremos ir descalzos á oír una misa, si queréis . . . Pero es menester que esto sirva para darnos valor . . . Nada de asustarse. ¡ Ánimo y achicar, achicar, muchachos!

La oferta les dió confianza y siguieron trabajando

con fe; de tal modo que en pocos minutos echaron la mayor parte del agua fuera y la lancha quedó desahogada. José observó que el palo del medio les estorbaba.

—Vamos á desarbolar del medio[1] —dijo, y él mismo se abalanzó á poner las manos en el mástil.

Pero en aquel instante vieron con espanto venir hacia ellos una ola inmensa, alta como una montaña y negra como una cueva.

—¡José, ya no hay comedia![2] —exclamó Bernardo resignado á morir.

El golpe fué tan rudo, que hizo caer de bruces á José, batiéndolo contra los bancos: la lancha quedó inundada, casi entre aguas. Pero aquél, aunque aturdido, se alzó bravamente gritando:

—¡Achicar, achicar! Esto no es nada.

XVI

¿Qué pasaba en Rodillero?

Las pocas lanchas que habían obedecido á la señal de José, regresaron al puerto antes del amanecer: sus tripulantes quedaron corridos y pesarosos al ver que tan ruinmente se les había engañado; mucho más con la matraca que las mujeres les dieron en casa.

—¡Siempre habías de ser tú el tonto! ¡Cuándo acabarás de saber con quién tratas, hombre de Dios?[3] ¡Ya verás qué marea hoy... ya lo verás!

Ellos callaban, según su costumbre, reconociendo la verdad que las asistía,[4] y haciendo juramento interior de no caer otra vez en el lazo.

Pero al entrar el día se modificó un poco la opinión: era tan triste el aspecto del mar, y el cariz tan feo, que ya no les pesó mucho de la holganza. Cuando envuelto en un chubasco se sintió en el pueblo el primer ramalazo del Noroeste, algunos se volvieron á sus esposas sonriendo:

— ¿Qué te parece? ¿Te gustaría que anduviese por la mar ahora, verdad?

Les tocó entonces callar á ellas. El segundo ramalazo, mucho más fuerte que el primero, puso en conmoción al vecindario. Acudieron hombres y mujeres á la ribera, y desde allí, á despecho del agua que caía á torrentes, subieron á San Esteban. El miedo y la zozobra se pintó tan pronto en todos los semblantes, que advertía bien claramente del desasosiego supersticioso que había reinado en el lugar todo el invierno. Las mujeres miraban con el rabillo del ojo á los marineros viejos: estos torcían el hocico.[1] Algunas se arrojaban á preguntar:

— ¿Hay cuidado, tío Pepe?

El tío Pepe, sin apartar los ojos del horizonte, contestaba:

— Muy bueno no está . . . Pero la mar no dijo todavía «aquí estoy.»

Lo dijo, sin embargo, más pronto de lo que se pensaba. La tormenta vino repentina, furiosa; la mar se revolvió en un instante de modo formidable, y comenzó á romper en los *Huesos de San Pedro,* que era el bajo[2] más cercano á la costa: al poco tiempo rompió también en el *Cobanín,* que era el más próximo por el otro lado de la ensenada. La muchedumbre que coronaba el monte de San Esteban contempló con pavor los pro-

gresos de la borrasca: algunas mujeres comenzaron á llorar.

Sin embargo, no había aún motivos para afligirse, al decir de los prácticos; el puerto se hallaba enteramente libre; con tal que no zozobrasen (y esto era cuenta de ellos,[1] pues estaba en su mano el evitarlo), podían entrar sin peligro en Rodillero. Alguno apuntó:

—¿Y los golpes de mar? ¿Tendrán tiempo á achicar el agua?

—¡Vaya si hay tiempo![2] . . . Pero no parece más que no hemos visto mares hasta ahora! No hay pueblo como éste para alborotarse por nada — dijo un marinero bilioso.

La energía con que pronunció estas palabras hizo callar á los pesimistas y tranquilizó un poco á las mujeres. Desgraciadamente, duró poco su triunfo: á los pocos minutos la mar rompía en el *Torno,* otro de los bajos de la barra.

Cerca de la capilla de San Esteban había una casucha que habitaba un labrador encargado por el gremio de mareantes, mediante un cortísimo estipendio anual, de encender las hogueras que servían de señal en los días ó noches de peligro. Este labrador, aunque se había embarcado pocas veces, conocía la mar como cualquier práctico. Después de observarla con atención un buen rato y haber vacilado muchas veces, sacó de la corralada[3] de su choza una carga de retama seca y tojo, la colocó en lo más alto del monte y la dió fuego. Era el primer aviso para los pescadores.

Elisa, que se hallaba entre la muchedumbre, cerca de su madrina, al ver la hoguera sintió que el corazón

se le apretaba; acordóse de la terrible maldición de la sacristana, y todos los presentimientos tristes y terrores supersticiosos que dormían en su alma, despertaron de golpe. Procuró, no obstante, reprimirse, por vergüenza, pero comenzó á recorrer los grupos escuchando con mal disimulada ansiedad los pareceres de los marineros: cada frase la dejaba yerta.

Entre las gentes se hablaba poco y se miraba mucho; el viento les azotaba la cara con las últimas gotas del chubasco. La mar crecía rápidamente: después de romper en los *Huesos de San Pedro,* en el *Cobanín* y en el *Torno,* rompió también en otro bajo más separado de la costa.

—¡Rompió en la *Furada!* .... Manuel, puedes encender otra hoguera—exclamó un marinero.

Manuel corrió á casa de nuevo, trajo otra carga de tojo y la encendió cerca de la primera. Esto era señal de peligro inminente: si los que estaban en la mar no se daban prisa á meterse en el puerto, se exponían á que se les cerrase pronto.

—¿Se ve alguna lancha, Rafael?—preguntó una joven, por cuyas mejillas rodaban dos gruesas lágrimas.

—Por ahora no; la salsa nos quita mucho la vista.

Ni una vela parecía en el horizonte: el afán, la angustia embargaban de tal modo á los espectadores, que se pasaban algunos minutos sin que una voz se alzase entre ellos: todos tenían la vista clavada en el *Carrero,*[1] un corto espacio que la barra de Rodillero tenía libre, y por donde las lanchas entraban á seguro cuando la mar estaba picada. Elisa sentía algunas gotas

de sudor frío en la frente, y se agarraba fuertemente á su madrina para no caerse.

Así trascurrió un cuarto de hora. De pronto de aquella muchedumbre salió un grito, un lamento más débil pero más triste que los rumores del Océano. Una ola acababa de romper en el *Carrero.* La barra no era ya más que una franja espumosa: el puerto estaba cerrado.

Manuel, pálido, silencioso, fué á buscar una nueva carga y la encendió al lado de las otras dos. La lluvia había cesado enteramente y las hogueras ardían animadas por el viento.

Elisa, al escuchar aquel grito, se estremeció, y por un movimiento irresistible semejante á inspiración, se alejó corriendo de aquella escena, bajó á saltos el sendero de los pinos, atravesó el pueblo solitario, subió la calzada de la iglesia y llegó desalada y jadeante á sus puertas. Se detuvo un instante á tomar aliento; después hizo la señal de la cruz, dobló las rodillas y sobre ellas entró caminando por la nave del templo hasta el altar mayor; pero en vez de parar allí torció á la derecha y comenzó á subir penosamente la escalera de caracol[1] que conducía al camarín del Cristo. Era la escalera de la penitencia y sus peldaños de piedra estaban gastados ya por las rodillas de los devotos; las de Elisa cuando llegó arriba chorreaban sangre.

El camarín era una pieza oscura, tapizada de retratos y ofrendas, con una ventana enrejada, abierta sobre la iglesia, por donde los fieles veían la veneranda imagen los días que se oficiaba en su altar. El Santo Cristo se hallaba, como de ordinario, tapado por una cortina de terciopelo: Elisa corrió con mano trémula

esta cortina y se prosternó. Poco rato después, unas tras otras, fueron entrando en la estancia muchas mujeres y prosternándose igualmente en silencio. Algún sollozo, imposible de reprimir, turbaba de vez en cuando el misterio y la majestad del adoratorio.

Por la tarde aplacó un poco la mar, y gracias á esto pudo, aunque con peligro, entrar un grupo numeroso de lanchas en Rodillero: más tarde entraron otras cuantas, pero al cerrar la noche faltaban cinco: una de ellas era la de José. Los marineros, que sabían á qué atenerse acerca de su suerte, porque habían visto perecer alguna, no se atrevían á decir palabra y contestaban con evasivas[1] á las infinitas preguntas que les dirigían: ninguno sabía nada; ninguno había visto nada. La ribera siguió llena de gente hasta las altas horas de la noche;[2] pero según avanzaba ésta, iba creciendo el desaliento. Poco á poco también la ribera se fué despoblando; sólo quedaron en ella las familias de los que aun estaban en la mar. Al fin éstas, perdida casi enteramente la esperanza, abandonaron la playa y entraron en el pueblo con la muerte en el alma.

¡Horrible noche aquélla! Aun suenan en mis oídos los ayes desgarradores de las esposas infelices, de los niños que llamaban á sus padres. El pueblo ofrecía un aspecto sombrío, espantoso: la gente discurría por la calle en grupos, formaba corros á la puerta de las casas; todos se hablaban á voces. Las tabernas estaban abiertas, y en ellas los hombres disputaban acaloradamente, echándose unos á otros la culpa de la desgracia. De vez en cuando, una mujer desgreñada, convulsa, cruzaba por la calle lanzando gritos horro-

rosos que erizaban los cabellos. Dentro de las casas también sonaban gemidos y sollozos.

A este primer momento de confusión y estrépito, sucedió otro de calma, más triste aún y más aciago, si posible fuera. La gente se fué encerrando en sus viviendas, y el dolor tomó un aspecto más resignado. ¡Dentro de aquellas pobres chozas, cuántas lagrimas se derramaron! En una de ellas, una pobre vieja, que tenía á sus dos hijos en la mar, lanzaba chillidos tan penetrantes, que las pocas personas que cruzaban por la calle se detenían horrorizadas á la puerta; en otra, una infeliz mujer que había perdido á su marido, sollozaba en un rincón, mientras dos criaturitas de tres ó cuatro años jugaban cerca comiendo avellanas.

Cuando Dios amaneció,[1] el pueblo parecía un cementerio. El cura hizo sonar las campanas llamando á la iglesia, y concertó, con los fieles que acudieron, celebrar al día siguiente un funeral[2] por el reposo de los que habían perecido.

Pero hacia el medio día corrió la voz, sin saber quién la trajera, de que algunas lanchas de Rodillero habían arribado[3] al puerto de Banzones, distante unas siete leguas. Tal noticia causó una emoción inmensa en el vecindario: la esperanza, muerta ya, renació de pronto en todos los corazones. Tornaron á reinar la confusión y el ruido en la calle; despacháronse propios veloces para que indagasen la verdad; los comentarios, las hipótesis que se hacían en los corrillos eran infinitos. El dia y la noche se pasaron en una ansiedad y congoja lastimosas; las pobres mujeres corrían de grupo en grupo, pálidas, llorosas, queriendo sorprender en las conversaciones de los hombres algo que las animase.

Por fin, á las doce llegó la nueva de que eran dos lanchas solamente las que habían arribado á Banzones. ¿Cuáles? Los propios no lo sabían ó no querían decirlo. Sin embargo, al poco rato comenzó á cundir secretamente la noticia de que una de ellas era la de José, y otra la de Toribio.

Allá, á la tarde,[1] un muchacho llegó desalado, cubierto de sudor y sin gorra.

—¡Ahí están, ahí están!

—¿Quiénes?

—¡Muchos, muchos! ¡Vienen muchos!—acertó á decir con trabajo, pues le faltaba respiración.—Estarán ahora en Antromero.

Entonces se operó una revolución indescriptible en el pueblo: los vecinos todos, sin exceptuar uno, salieron de sus casas, se agitaron en la calle breves instantes con estruendo, y formando una masa compacta, abandonaron presurosos el lugar. Aquella masa siguió el camino de Antromero, orillas de la mar, en un estado de agitación y angustia que es difícil representarse. Los hombres charlaban, haciendo cálculos acerca del modo que habrían tenido sus compañeros de salvarse: las mujeres iban en silencio arrastrando á los niños que se quejaban en vano de cansancio. Después de caminar media legua, en cierto paraje descubierto, alcanzaron á ver á lo lejos un grupo de marineros que hacia ellos venían con los remos al hombro. Un clamor formidable salió de aquella muchedumbre. El grupo de los pescadores respondió ¡hurra! agitando en el aire las boinas. Otro grito de acá; otro en seguida de allá. De esta suerte se fueron acercando á toda prisa y muy pronto llegaron á tocarse.

¡Escena gozosa y terrible á la vez! Al confundirse el grande y el pequeño grupo, estallaron á un tiempo ayes de dolor y gritos de alegría. Las mujeres abrían los ojos desmesuradamente buscando á los suyos, y no hallándolos, rompían en gemidos lastimeros y se dejaban caer al suelo retorciéndose los brazos con desesperación: otras, más afortunadas, al tropezar con el esposo de su alma, con el hijo de sus entrañas,[1] se arrojaban á ellos como fieras, y permanecían clavadas á su pecho sin que fuerza en el mundo fuera bastante á despegarlas. Los pobres náufragos, objeto de aquella calurosa acogida, sonreían queriendo ocultar su emoción, pero las lágrimas les resbalaban, á su pesar, por las mejillas.

Elisa, que iba entre la muchedumbre, al ver á José, sintió en la garganta un nudo tan estrecho,[2] que pensó ahogarse: llevóse las manos al rostro y rompió á sollozar procurando no hacer ruido. El marinero sintióse sujeto, casi asfixiado por los brazos de su madre: mas por encima del hombro de ésta, buscó con afán á su prometida. Elisa levantó el rostro hacia él y sus ojos se encontraron y se besaron.

Pasado el primer momento de expansión, aquella masa de gente tornó á paso lento hacia el pueblo. Cada uno de los náufragos vióse rodeado inmediatamente por un grupo de compañeros, los cuales se enteraban por menudo[3] y con interés de las peripecias de la jornada:[4] sus mujeres iban detrás; algunas veces para cerciorarse de que los tenían vivos les llamaban por su nombre, y al volver ellos el rostro no tenían qué decirles.

Aquella misma tarde se convino dar gracias á Dios

al día siguiente con una solemne fiesta. Resultó que casi todos los marineros salvados habían ofrecido lo mismo, oír misa descalzos en el altar del Cristo: era una oferta muy común en Rodillero en los momentos de peligro y que venía de padres á hijos. Y en efecto, á la mañana siguiente se reunieron en la ribera, y desde allí, cada compañía con su patrón á la cabeza, se encaminaron lentamente hacia la iglesia descalzos todos y con la cabeza descubierta. Marchaban graves, callados, pintada en sus ojos serenos la fe sencilla y ardiente á la vez del que no conoce de esta vida más que las amarguras. Detrás marchaban las mujeres, los niños y los pocos señores que había en el pueblo, silenciosos también, embargados por la emoción al ver á aquellos hombres tan fuertes y tan ásperos humillarse como débiles criaturas. Las viudas, los huérfanos de los que habían quedado en la mar iban también allí á rogar por el descanso de los suyos: se habían puesto un pañuelo, un delantal, una boína, cualquier prenda de color negro que les fué posible adquirir en el momento.

Y en la pequeña iglesia de Rodillero el milagroso Cristo les aguardaba pendiente de la cruz, con los brazos abiertos. Él era también un pobre náufrago, libertado de las aguas por la piedad de unos pescadores; había probado como ellos la tristeza y la soledad del océano y el amargor de sus olas. Doblaron la rodilla y hundieron la cabeza en el pecho, mientras la boca murmuraba plegarias aprendidas en la niñez, nunca pronunciadas ccn más fervor. Los cirios de que estaba rodeada la sacrosanta imagen chisporroteaban tristemente; de la muchedumbre salía un murmullo levísimo. La voz cascada y temblorosa del sacerdote que

oficiaba rompía de vez en cuando el silencio majestuoso del templo.

Al concluirse el oficio, Elisa y José se encontraron en el pórtico de la iglesia y se dirigieron una tierna sonrisa; y con ese egoísmo inocente y perdonable que caracteriza al amor, olvidaron en un punto toda la tristeza que en torno suyo reinaba, y en viva y alegre plática bajaron emparejados la calzada del pueblo, dejando señalado,[1] antes de llegar á casa, el día de su boda.



NOTES.



NOTES

Page 1. — 1. **Asturias,** province of northern Spain. Since 1833 it has been called, officially, by the name of its capital, Oviedo, though the older name remains in ordinary usage.

2. **Rodillero,** the real name is Cudillero.

3. **ya que no,** *even if not.*

4. **se las puede haber,** *it may vie. Haber(se) las con,* "to deal with," then "to dispute with," "to rival." *Las,* as also the sing. *la,* is found in numerous idioms in an indeterminate sense, though representing, at least originally, some feminine noun understood; not necessarily *cosa.* Cf. page 94, note 1, and page 104, note 4.

5. **cuando se mienta . . . á,** *when mention is made of.* Impersonal reflexive, substitute for passive.

6. **piños,** *clusters.*

Page 2. — 1. **tramos y revueltas,** *stretches and windings.*

2. **no dan espacio más que,** *leave room only.*

3. **van haciendo eses,** *go winding on,* lit. "making S's."

4. **en forma de escalinata,** *like a flight of steps. Escalinata* is properly a straight flight of stone steps, few in number, leading up to a building, Eng. "perron."

5. **dais con,** *meet, find. Dar,* in this and many other idioms, has the force of "to strike" or "come into contact with."

6. **se tornan,** *become.* Cf. Eng. "to turn traitor."

7. **al revolver de una peña,** *on turning (round) a cliff.*

8. **subir . . . á la rastra,** *drag up,* lit. "bring up dragging," "on the drag."

9. **adosadas,** *attached.* A term of structural engineering = *adheridas, arrimadas.*

10. **lustre,** *position, importance.*

Page 3. — 1. **les daréis la razón,** *you will say that they were right.*

2. **debe de ser bien triste,** *must be very gloomy.* *Deber* alone denotes obligation, *deber de,* probability. This distinction is not universally observed, but is tending to become so. *Bien* here = *muy.*

3. **no se echa menos,** *is not missed.* Also *echar de menos.*

4. **Adviértese.** This inversion of verb and personal pronoun object occurs only when the verb is indicative, and, in general, only when it begins a clause; though deviations from this latter usage are frequent in Valdés and other contemporary authors.

5. **sin poder atribuirlo,** *without one's being able to attribute it.* Infinitive with indefinite subject (*uno*) understood.

6. **apenas,** *almost as soon as,* lit. "hardly."

Page 4. — 1. **inutilizan.** *Se* is understood with this verb from preceding *mueren.*

2. **va labrando su espíritu,** *goes on moulding their character.*

3. **habilidosa,** *capable.*

4. **lo moral,** *the moral nature.*

5. **no hay más que,** *one can but,* lit. "there is no more than."

6. **rasgados,** *large and full.* Cf. Fr. *bien fendu.*

Page 5. — 1. **los que amáis,** *you who love.* Antecedent *vosotros* understood. This construction is analogous to the frequent suppression of the subject-pronoun before a noun or pronoun in apposition. Cf. page 7, line 9.

2. **á la ventura,** *at random.*

3. **las montañas de tierra adentro,** *the mountains inland.* *Tierra adentro* is an adverbial phrase, here used substantively, governed by *de,* the whole forming an adjectival phrase.

Page 6. — 1. **carel,** *wales* or *bends of the boat.*

2. **quiénes . . . quiénes . . . quiénes,** *some . . . some . . . others.*

3. **les hacía no soltarlos.** *Les* is dative. The object of *hacer* when it governs also an infinitive is dative when the infinitive is transitive; when the latter is intransitive, the object is accusative if it denote a thing, usually dative if denoting a person.

4. **formando á modo de escuadrilla,** *forming as it were a little squadron.*

5. **fijándose,** *fixing his attention.* As in so many other cases we have here a meaning neglected by the dictionaries. The verb

is also used without complement expressed: *no me fijé*, "I did not notice."

6. **no dejaban de ser,** *were nevertheless*, lit. "did not leave off being." Cf. Fr. *cela ne laisse pas de m'ennuyer.*

Page 7. — 1. **el semblante viene de allá,** *it seems likely to blow from that quarter*, lit. "the signs [of it] are coming from yonder."

2. **amuró,** *has tacked.* This use of the preterite as equivalent to a perfect in speaking of recent events is not sufficiently noted by the grammars. It is used when the result of the action rather than the action itself is to be emphasized. Cf. *¿Ya se levantó V.?* "Have you risen already?" i.e. "Are you already up?" *Todo se acabó*, "It's all over."

3. **bonito,** *bonito, striped tunny.* This fish, which plays a considerable rôle in the novel, may be so called from its handsome coloring, steel-blue with oblique stripes of black. It belongs to the mackerel family (*Scombridae*), its scientific name being *Sarda Sarda.* It reaches a length of 2–2½ ft. and a weight of 8–10 lbs. Its flesh is rather coarse and oily, red in color, resembling beef in appearance.

4. **Allá veremos,** *We shall see when the time comes*, lit. "yonder." There is an additional shade of meaning in the phrase which might be expressed by "but I won't guarantee it."

5. **tornó á ser.** *Tornar*, like *volver*, with *á* + following infinitive means "to be (or do) a thing again."

6. **mira qué cara tan fea pone el Corsario para dormir,** *see what a very ugly face the Corsair* (nickname) *makes when he sleeps. Qué tan = cuán. Cara . . . para dormir* might be rendered "sleeping-face" if this phrase were allowable. Cf. *un estante para libros*, "a book-case."

Page 8. — 1. **¡Ay María!** *My goodness!* It is almost superfluous to note that this and similar expressions have, like "Heavens!" in English, *mon Dieu!* etc., in French, a much weaker force than literal translation would convey.

2. **dar un testerazo,** *strike his head*, lit. "give a blow with (*-azo*) the head."

3. **tirar ufano.** This use of an adjective relating to the subject is somewhat common in Spanish in cases where in English we prefer an adverb modifying the verb.

4. **Se necesita que . . . no lo aferre,** *There can't be a fish in the sea without this wretch catching it,* lit. "it is necessary that there be not . . . in order that he may not catch it." The prefix *re–*, attached to adjectives, adverbs and, less frequently, to nouns, is characteristic of familiar style. It adds an intensive or superlative force, which undoubtedly derives from its original force of repetition. Sometimes doubled, or takes the form *rete–*, e.g. *¡Qué reteinfamia!* "What terrible infamy!"

5. **se pusieron al tanto de,** *became aware of.*

6. **frente á,** *toward, to,* lit. "facing."

7. **¡Así Dios me mate!** *May I never draw another breath!* lit "So may God kill me!"

8. **el mejor animal de la costera,** *the best fish of the season. Costera,* "fisherman's basket," "haul," "fishing-season."

9. **Mientras tanto,** *Meanwhile.*

10. **de vez en cuando,** *from time to time.* Also *de cuando en cuando.*

11. **traerá consigo,** *can he have about him.* Future of probability or modified statement.

Page 9. — 1. **cada vez más,** *more and more.*

2. **no hizo caso,** *paid no attention.*

3. **siguió,** *went on.*

4. **¡Allí fué Troya!** *Then came the crash!* lit. "There was (the fall of) Troy!"

5. **soltaron . . . el hilo de la risa,** *burst out laughing all together,* lit. "loosed the thread of laughter." Similar phrases are: *soltar la llave de las lágrimas, escaparse el flujo de la risa,* etc., etc.

6. **que.** The conjunction *que* is frequently used with a subtle and variable force. Here it lends emphasis and might be rendered by a simple "and": *and they needed to badly enough.* In line 12, below, it is nearly equivalent to *porque.* Sometimes it expresses surprise, etc., and may be rendered "so," cf. page 71, note 2. And elsewhere it shades into a mere expletive, without translatable force.

7. **un si es no es,** *a trifle.*

8. **que yo,** elliptical for *en que yo me he visto.*

Page 10. — 1. **Á las pocas brazas de hilo que metió dentro,** *After hauling in a few fathoms of line,* lit. "upon, or after the few fathoms of line that he brought in."

Page 11. — 1. **por dar la vuelta,** *to turn.*

2. **hiciese la mortecina,** *were feigning death.*

3. **de pronto,** *all at once, suddenly.*

4. **que en poco estuvo no saltase otra vez al agua,** *that he came near jumping into the water again.* The conjunction *que* is here omitted before *no saltase.* Generally speaking, it is permissible to omit this introductory *que* between two contiguous verbs, the second of which is subordinate to the first, especially if the dependent verb be subjunctive. Cases in which the omission is relatively frequent are: 1) when the second clause begins with *no,* as above, or after a verb of fearing; 2) after a verb of mental activity, as *espero me escribas;* 3) after an impersonal verb or verb-phrase, as *no es fácil lo consiga.*

5. **En obra de,** *In about, in a matter of.*

6. **aguza las uñas que asombra,** *puts his best foot foremost, does wonders,* lit. "sharpens his nails [so] that he astonishes."

Page 12. — 1. **cambiar,** *tack.*

2. **en cuanto,** *as soon as.*

3. **quedaría.** *Quedar, ir, andar,* etc., are used as substitutes for *estar,* yet each retains its own particular connotation.

4. **perdonaba.** Imperfect with force of conditional. The effect is to make the statement more graphic.

5. **los cuartos,** *the cash.*

6. **la maestra,** *the schoolmaster's wife.*

7. **entre risueño y enfadado,** *half smiling, half vexed.*

Page 13. — 1. **la gente principal ó de media levita,** *the gentry or well-to-do citizens. Levita,* "frock coat," *gente de levita,* "people who [can afford to] wear such a garment," people of the cultured or leisured class. *Gente principal = gente de levita, gente de media levita = la de la clase media.*

2. **Antes de llegar, con mucho,** *Long before they arrived. Con mucho,* "by much."

3. **embarrancando,** *grounding, sinking in.*

4. **se salían.** Some intransitive verbs are used reflexively to emphasize the volition of the agent. *El prisionero salió de la cárcel,* "the prisoner left the gaol"; *el p. se salió,* etc., "the prisoner got out of gaol." Cf. below, *se quedaban.*

5. **pieza tras pieza,** *one after another, fish after fish. Pieza* is used in speaking of a unit of fish or game.

Page 14. — 1. **mujerucas,** *old wives. -uco, -uca,* depreciative, contemptuous in force. A somewhat rare suffix.

2. **lo fresco,** *the fresh fish.*

3. **bajarlo,** i.e. *el precio.*

4. **Á mí no me cuente nada,** *Don't blame me for it,* lit. "Do not ascribe anything to me."

5. **señá** = *señora.*

6. **Yo no he dicho esta boca es mía,** *I didn't say a word,* lit. "I didn't say this mouth is mine."

7. **Allá ellos lo arreglaron,** *They settled it among themselves. Allá* in this and similar expressions has not entirely lost its usual connotations of direction and motion. It indicates the throwing off of responsibility and the attaching it to some one else. Cf. page 7, note 4, and page 21, note 3.

8. **tú has debido advertirles,** *you ought to have warned them.*

Page 15. — 1. **te haces cargo,** *you note.*

2 **el maragato siguiendo así nos devolverá los barriles,** *if it keeps on this way the Maragato* (man from the Maragatería, district south of Astorga, in León) *will return us the casks,* i.e. "he will not buy."

3. **dar la lengua,** *parley.*

4. **¿Le parece mucho á diez cuartos?** *Do you think ten cuartos* [a pound] *too much?* lit. "does it seem to you [too] much at ten *cuartos?*" Note the pregnant meaning of *mucho.* "Too" may be expressed (though not with *mucho*) by *muy* (. . . *para*) or *demasiado,* though the latter is rather avoided, and the adjective or adverb suffices for the double sense, e.g. *esta puerta es grande para el cuarto,* "this door is too large for the room." — The *cuarto* = 4 *maravedís* and the *real* = 34 *mar.,* or about 5 cents of our money.

5. **para no andar en más cuestiones,** *not to dispute any longer.*

6. **se encogió de hombros,** *shrugged his shoulders.*

7. **percal,** *percale,* a cotton stuff.

8. **embebecida,** *absorbed.*

Page 16. — 1. **Nos falta,** *We have to.*

2. **no te pongas seria,** *don't get solemn, look **grave.***

3. **el día de San Juan.** The 24th of June.

Page 17. — 1. **Claro está,** *Of course.* Also simply *claro.*

2. **no se da por entendida,** *gives no sign,* lit. "does not show herself as [so] understanding [it]." Several idioms are formed on this model; cf. page 18, note 6, page 32, note 1, and page 150, note 4.

3. **así que,** *as soon as.*

4. **El que no se atreve, no pasa la mar,** *Nothing venture, nothing win.*

5. **Lo mismo da,** *It's all the same.*

6. **Hasta luego,** *Good-bye for the present.* Cf. Fr. *à bientôt.*

7. **por la playa arriba,** *up over the beach.*

Page 18. — 1. **á la sazón,** *at the time.*

2. **tendezuela,** depreciative diminutive of *tienda.*

3. **bacalao,** also written *bacallao.*

4. **botes,** *cans.*

5. **á medio consumir,** *half consumed.* The infinitive represents progressive condition, whereas the past participle (*medio consumido*) would indicate stationary condition.

6. **no se daba por ofendida,** *took no offence.*

7. **maestro de primeras letras,** *primary teacher.*

8. **percalina,** *percaline, lining-cotton.*

9. **sujetos,** *fastened.*

10. **hacía gala,** *displayed, paraded.*

11. **no eran parte,** *did not avail, were not sufficient. Parte,* in this expression, has the meaning of "[sufficient] cause."

Page 19. — 1. **poco más ó menos,** *or thereabout, approximately.*

2. **sabrosos,** *pleasurable.*

Page 20. — 1. **daba remate,** *finished.*

2. **"le tenía en un puño,"** "*had him under her thumb,*" *kept him in subjection,* lit. "held him in one fist."

3. **porque . . . se prestase.** The use of the subjunctive after *porque* (which ordinarily requires the indicative) shows that the reason given is rather a suggestion of the speaker's or a motive than a definite logical cause. One might translate *because, no doubt* . . . . Cf. page 114, note 2.

4. **toda,** *it all.*

Page 21. — 1. **marea,** *catch,* lit. "tide."

2. **Á última hora,** *At the last moment.*

3. **allá la señá Isabel,** *I refer you to Mrs. Elizabeth.* Cf. page 14, note 7.

4. **entre dientes,** *mumbling.*

5. **saltó,** *burst out.*

6. **recalcando,** *emphasizing.*

7. **á no encontrarse,** *á* + inf. = an if-clause, just as *al* + inf. = a time-clause.

8. **de espaldas,** *with his back turned.*

Page 23. — 1. **justificado,** *righteous, upright.*

Page 24. — 1. **Nadie le conocía,** *No one knew him to have. Le,* dative of possession; cf. Fr. *on ne lui connaît que deux amis.*

2. **muiles,** *mullet.* The word is written variously *mugil, mujil, muil.*

3. **caldereta,** *fish-stew.*

4. **por más que,** *although, however much. Por . . . que* is a concessive conjunctive formula, followed by indicative or subjunctive according as fact or ideation is prominent. The intervening word may be noun, adjective or adverb, e.g. *por ocasión que venga,* "whatever occasion may arise," *por fuerte que fuese,* "however strong he might be," and cf. below, page 56, note 2.

Page 25. — 1. **arregla.** Present for future. Note that Elisa uses the formal, her mother the familiar mode of address.

2. **se arrojó,** *ventured.*

3. **mil fanegas de renta,** *1000 fanegas of income [-yielding land].* The *fanega* is a measure of land of varying extent in different parts of Spain.

Page 26. — 1. **concejo,** *district,* subdivided into parishes (*parroquias*).

2. **á él le salieron baratas,** *they stood him cheap. Salir* = "to turn out."

3. **Andalucía.** Southernmost and largest province of Spain.

4. **¿y qué hay con eso?** *and what of that?*

5. **con sorna,** *with a malicious drawl. Sorna* is intentional and malicious slowness of speech or action.

6. **que,** may here be rendered *only.* Cf. page 9, note 6.

7. **primacía,** *superiority of rank, precedence.* An evident pun on *primo,* which is of course lost in translating.

8. **unos petates, unos hidalgüelos de mala muerte,** *a lot of good-for-nothings, petty country gentry of small importance,* '*of no account.*' Cf. *un empleíllo de mala muerte,* "a wretched little position."

9. **levantaban pendón,** *were raising their standard.*

10. **tenían fundada . . . la horca,** *had their collegiate church founded and the gallows set up.* A collegiate church is one which, not being the seat of a bishop or archbishop, is governed by secular dignitaries and canons, and in which the divine services are celebrated as in cathedrals.

Page 27. — 1. **teniéndolo á mucho honor,** *holding it a high honor.*

2. **¿Qué tienes que partir en . . .?** *What have you to do with . . .?* lit. "share."

3. **ni.** Note that *ni* is used instead of *ó* where negation is expressed or even merely implied, as here.

4. **pendejo,** *poltroon.*

5. **sin dársele nada . . . de,** *without caring anything about. Dársele = importarle.*

6. **y hasta otra,** *and that was the end of it till the next time.* Elliptical for *hasta otra vez.*

7. **tendrá ganas de irse,** *no doubt wishes to be going.* Cf. page 8, note 11.

8. **avizor,** *searching.*

Page 28. — 1. **estantería,** *shelves.*

2. **ojos saltones,** *goggle-eyes.*

3. **lo ha olido,** *got wind of it, scented it out.*

4. **¡Si se descuida en echar fuera al maestro!** *If she had delayed, neglected to throw the dominie out!* We have here a present indicative substituted, to render the narration more graphic, for a plpf. subjunctive. The sentence might be completed: *el otro le pide* (*= hubiera pedido*) *dinero.*

5. **que seguía . . . en espera de,** *who stayed waiting for.*

6. **¿gustan VV. de cenar?** It is customary in Spanish countries to offer whatever one has in the way of food, etc., to those present, but the invitation may be accepted only if repeated.

Page 29. — 1. **viene,** *suits.*

2. **enreda algo,** *interferes somewhat.*

3. **No te apures tanto, mujer,** *Don't worry so much, I tell you.*

Mujer and *hombre* are often used as expletives in familiar address by way of emphasis or remonstrance. Cf. page 160, note 3.

4. **dando las buenas noches,** *saying good-night.*

5. **al tenor de,** *after the fashion of, like.*

6. **Hernán-Cortés y Doña Marina.** The latter was an Indian woman, daughter of a *cacique*, but presented as a slave to Cortés, whom she greatly aided in his conquest, especially by serving him as interpreter.

7. **funda de hilo,** *linen cover. Hilo* = "[linen] thread." Cf. Eng. "thread-lace," which is made of linen.

Page 30. — 1. **las cuentas todas.** Note the unusual position of *todas*, which lends emphasis.

2. **No dejes de hablarle,** *Do not fail to speak to her*, i.e. of our marriage.

3. **¡No es esto . . .!** *Isn't that right?*

4. **Allá V. . . ., yo no llevo apunte,** *I leave it to you . . ., I have no note of it. Llevar* as a substitute for *tener* has the sub-sense of continuation.

5. **echar la cuenta,** *cast the account.*

6. **dando vueltas á,** *turning over.*

7. **todo él estaba,** *he was wholly.*

8. **concluida que fuese la cuenta,** *when the calculation should be completed.*

9. **Son,** *It is.*

Page 31. — 1. **siete cuartos.** She cheats him, but the book does not give us data for estimating the amount of his loss.

2. **después de haberle chupado la sangre,** *after having 'bled' him*, lit. "sucked his blood."

Page 32. — 1. **se disponía á darla por terminada,** *gave signs of considering it at an end.*

2. **á espaldas de su madre,** *behind her mother's back.*

3. **un sin número,** *no end of.* The phrase *sin número* is treated as a substantive.

4. **mayormente,** *in the main.*

Page 33. — 1. **no chistaba,** *did not utter a word.*

2. **¡Vaya un susto que me has dado!** *Oh, but you've given me a fright!*

3. **nada,** *not at all.*

4. **en mi mano,** *in my power.*

5. **dar vueltas,** *rack my brains,* lit. "go about [seeking a thing without finding it]."

6. **echáis á perder,** *spoil.*

7. **Lo mismo tú que Elisa,** *You as well as Elisa.*

8. **mañana ú otro día,** *some day or other.*

Page 34. — 1. **de la parte de fuera,** *outside.*

2. **soñado con,** *dreamed of.*

3. **tenía tanto empeño en que la hablases,** *I was so anxious for you to speak to her.*

Page 35. — 1. **Vizcaya,** one of the three Basque provinces (Guipúzcoa, Álava, Vizcaya). Separated by the province of Santander from Asturias.

2. **Santander,** province to the east of Asturias, now incorporated with Old Castile.

Page 36. — 1. **se veía y deseaba,** *worked very hard, had much difficulty in.*

2. **á los pocos meses supo,** *a few months afterward she learned.*

Page 37.— 1. **apisonada,** *hard,* lit. "rammed," "well-packed."

2. **por meterse en la vida ajena,** *for meddling with other people's affairs.*

3. **cualquiera,** *any one.* Here a pron., more commonly an adj. Grammars do not note this use.

4. **en su busca,** *in search of him.* Possess. adj. replaces objective genitive.

Page 38. — 1. **eran de oír,** *were worth hearing.*

2. **de rapaz,** *as "boy."*

3. **despavilar,** *rouse.* Also written *despabilar.* This quite frequent variation is due to the fact that *b* and *v* have the same phonetic values, that of a bilabial fricative generally, and that of a bilabial explosive after *m* (and *n* = *m*).

Page 39. — 1. **la navegación de altura,** *sailing the high seas.*

2. **una chica como una plata,** *a fine girl,* lit. "[shining] like silver," i.e. neat and pretty. Cf. *valer tanto como la plata,* "to be worth one's weight in gold." But also *esa niña es de oro.*

Page 40. — 1. **alguna de esas miradas.** The grammars do not note this curious use of the singular of *alguno* in a distributive or plural sense. It is paralleled by the Italian *alcuno* (e.g. *c' era alcuno presente che diceva*). Cf. in Spanish the similar use of *tanto*: *al ver tanto libro*, "on seeing so many books." In English the use of "many a," "many a man," etc., is somewhat analogous.

2. **nunca,** *ever.* Correlative to negative prefix in *desconfiaba.*

3. **en vías de arreglo,** *in a way of being settled.* The plural is sometimes used with a force apparently singular, but more general or indefinite. Here the idea is perhaps "in one of a number of possible ways." Cf. *al fin del mes*, "at the end of the month," *á fines del mes*, "about the end of the month" (during the last days of the month?). In the conventional forms of greeting, *buenos días*, etc., the fundamental idea is, according to Foerster, *Spanische Sprachlehre*, page 275, to extend the greeting to subsequent meetings.

4. **romería,** journey or *pilgrimage* made to some sanctuary. It is mainly, however, a pleasure-trip or picnic, for when the religious duties are accomplished, the rest of the time is given over to dancing and other amusements.

Page 41. — 1. **en un principio,** *at first.*

2. **hacer agua,** *leak.*

3. **en último resultado,** *as a last resource.*

4. **llevar á cabo,** *carry out*, lit. "bring to an end."

5. **cavilaciones,** *worries, brooding.*

6. **el Robledal,** *the Oaks*, lit. "oak-grove" or "oak-forest."

Page 42. — 1. **allí tomar.** Infinitive for imperative. This use is confined to brief directions and commands.

2. **á estas horas,** *at this time* [*of night*]. Cf. page 40, note 3.

3. **con el rabillo del ojo,** *out of the corner of his eye*, lit. "with the tail of his eye."

Page 43. — 1. **con alientos.** Here the plur. seems to be merely a stronger form of the sing., or to express the sum of courage or energy: *with* [*full*] *courage.*

2. **¿Y cuánto te ha tocado de estas mareas?** *And how much has fallen to your share out of this catch?*

Page 44. — 1. **hasta mañana que,** *until to-morrow when. Hasta que,* used of future time, governs the subjunctive, and the insertion of *mañana* does not change the construction.

Page 45. — 1. **esa sin vergüenza,** *that shameless woman.* Cf. page 32, note 3.

2. **echándote de cebo á su hija,** *enticing you with her daughter,* lit. "throwing you her daughter as bait."

3. **para darte á la postre con la puerta en los hocicos,** *only to shut the door in your face at last. Hocico,* properly "snout."

4. **hazme reír,** *laughing-stock.* Written also as one word, *hazmerreír.* The word belongs to a somewhat limited class of compound nouns formed of phrases, cf. *quehaceres,* "occupations," *cumpleaños,* "birthday."

5. **chino,** *simpleton.*

6. **Soy dueño de dar . . . á quien me parezca,** *I am free to give what is mine to whomever I like,* lit. "I am master of giving . . . to whomever it seems best to me [to give it]."

7. **¿Y mo lo echas en cara . . .?** *And you twit me with it?* lit. "and you throw it in my face?"

8. **¡No me faltaba ya más que eso!** *That caps the climax, that's the last straw,* lit. "I lacked no more than that." Another form of the phrase is *¡Eso faltaba!*

9. **al pie de las calderas,** *over the kettles. Al pie de* = 1. "at the foot of," then 2. "near," "next," then 3. "about," "over."

10. **andar arrastrada,** *live in misery.* lit. "go dragging along."

Page 46. — 1. **¡Anda tú . . .!** *Out upon you!*

2. **¡Vergüenza había de darte!** *You ought to be ashamed of yourself,* lit. "it ought to give you shame." Subj. is *ello* understood.

3. **¿Verdad?** *Don't you?* Elliptical for *no es verdad?*

Page 47. — 1. **los acontecimientos pareció que justificaban.** The logical order would be *pareció que,* etc. Such inversion, however, is common where the principal verb is in sense really an auxiliary to the second, and in such cases *que* is often omitted.

2. **cuentas galanas,** *fine calculations, castles in the air.* Also *cuentas alegres.*

3. **ó sea,** *that is to say.* The conjunction *ó*, when it denotes not difference or separation, but equivalence, is sometimes strengthened by the present subjunctive of the verb *ser.* Cf. Italian *ossia.*

4. **ninguna,** *none other.*

Page 48. — 1. **mañana tendremos hijos,** *before long there will be children.*

2. **consentía** = *permitía.*

3. **va empapada,** *is imbued, replete.*

4. **la conocimos,** *we made her acquaintance.*

Page 49. — 1. **por la parte de tierra,** *on the land side.*

2 **al cerrar el horizonte,** *where the horizon ended.* This construction, which usually marks time, here denotes place. But the idea of time is still present in the suggestion of the glance travelling over the scene. The transition is very natural.

3. **la costa cantábrica.** Cantabria was a province of ancient Spain, including the north coast to the Pyrenees, Biscay and western Guipúzcoa. The Cantabrian Mts. are the coast range of northern Spain, the western continuation of the Pyrenees.

4. **se esforzaba con ilusión en averiguar,** *tried fondly to discover,* i.e. "tried to give herself the illusion of discovering," "to deceive herself into believing she discovered." The same idea might be expressed by *trataba de ilusionarse en uno de ellos.*

5. **sería,** *might be.* Conditional of modified statement.

6. **como que,** *since indeed.*

7. **campar por sus respetos,** *to act independently.* *Campar* = "to be prominent," "take precedence."

Page 50. — 1. **ora . . . bien,** *now . . . now, at one time . . . at another.* Also *ora . . . ora.*

2. **torcía el gesto,** *made a wry face,* lit. "twisted her face."

3. **antes,** *sooner.*

4. **poner de manifiesto,** *make manifest.*

5. **rellena,** *full to overflowing, very full.*

6. **arbitrando recursos,** *devising means.*

7. **volver sobre,** *retract,* "*go back on.*"

Page 51. — 1. **bígaros,** *small sea-snails.*

2. **cuyas.** Here a substitute for *las cuales.* This construction, though objected to by grammarians, is gaining acceptance.

3. **corrían,** *pursued, ran after.*

4. **le dieran en lo vivo,** *wound him to the quick.*

5. **Cayó,** *It's down,* lit. "it has fallen." Cf. page 7, note 2.

6. **poner . . . tierra por medio,** *put distance between* [*them*].

7. **dar . . . en el suelo,** *fall to the ground.*

8. **si bien . . . en ello,** *though in this case* (*ya*) *it was men who took pleasure in it.*

Page 52. — 1. **de buena tinta,** *on good authority, from a good source,* lit. "ink."

2. **al compás que,** *in proportion as.*

3. **sin que dejase de echarle,** *without being sure to cast at him.* This very curious construction is not noted in grammars or dictionaries, not even in Cuervo's excellent *Diccionario de Construcción.* The development of *dejar de* as a negative may be summarized as follows: 1. It negatives an action by denoting its cessation, e.g. *deje V. de hablar.* 2. From "ceasing to do" the next step is "fail to begin," cf. page 30, note 2. 3. *No dejar de* = "nevertheless," cf. page 6, note 6. 4. *Dejar de* = *no,* e.g. *si éramos liberales, ó dejábamos de serlo.* 5. Finally, as in the present example, it comes to be merely an expletive (here correlative to *sin*), though an expletive which adds a certain emphasis. *No coma V. melón sin dejar de echarle sal,* "Don't eat melon without putting salt on it." *No pase V. por Madrid sin dejar de venir á verme.*

4. **le ponía semblante halagüeño,** *looked sweetly at him,* lit. "made him a friendly face."

5. **en que se deshacía el tonto,** *in which the idiot indulged,* "to which he abandoned himself," "gave vent."

6. **siempre que,** *provided that.*

Page 53. — 1. **á ver,** *let us see, and we shall see.* This construction, imperative in force, is explainable by the ellipse of some word like *vamos.*

2. **al célebre Cristo.** This image is not really at Cudillero, but at Candás, another small port-town of Asturias.

3. **se hizo con él encontradiza,** *met him as if by chance.* The suffix *-izo* indicates susceptibility or tendency, "that may be met."

4. **¿Qué tal?** *How goes it?*

5 **caen muchos?** *are you catching many?* lit. "are many falling?" *Caer en el anzuelo* is the full expression.

6. **Marea muerta,** *slack tide.*

7. **coge poco.** Rufo speaks of himself in the 3d person.

8. **Padre no gusta cangrejos** = *Al padre no le gustan los cangrejos.*

Page 54. — 1. **Todos, Elisa** = *Todos serán para Elisa.*

2. **yo quiere mucho Elisa** = *yo quiero mucho á Elisa.*

3. **Usté** = *Usted. Usté* represents phonetically the common pronunciation of this pron.

Page 55. — 1. **echo pique** = *echo á pique, sink.*

2. **dando,** *striking.*

3. **botas de montar,** *riding-boots.*

Page 56. — 1. **hasta la vista,** *au revoir.*

2. **por muy arriba que,** *however far up.* Cf. page 24, note 4.

3. **cabo de mar,** *harbor-master.*

4. **la comandancia,** *the authorities.* In every important Spanish port there is a military chief of marine called *comandante,* who settles local maritime affairs which in any way concern the State. His office is called *comandancia.*

Page 57. — 1. **mares gruesas,** *heavy seas,* lit. "thick."

2. **la hora menos pensada,** *when least expected,* lit. "the hour least thought of."

3. **diesen con ellos al través,** *drive them ashore* [*wrecked*].

4. **dar la razón á los que,** *show that those were in the right who.*

5. **levantiscos,** *turbulent.*

Page 58. — 1. **á poder de,** *by dint of.*

2. **José, levanta . . . perdida lancha** = *José, levántate . . . tienes perdida tu lancha.* Somewhat broken Spanish.

3. **trajín,** *rocking, driving to and fro.*

Page 59. — 1. **estrellas filantes,** *shooting stars.*

2. **se halló con que,** *found out that.*

3. **forano,** *from the sea,* lit. "from outside."

4. **tanto montaba,** *amounted to the same thing.*

Page 60. — 1. **Por la orilla adelante,** *On along the shore.*

2. **barada,** *stuck, grounded. Barar* also written *varar.*

3. **cifrada,** *fixed,* lit. "calculated."

4. **á pico,** *sheer.*

Page 61. — 1. **abiertos,** *torn,* lit. "opened (pierced)."

2. **al arma,** *armed, in battle array.*

Page 62. — 1. **como si entonces tan sólo,** *as if then and then only.*

2. **se diese cuenta,** *realized.*

Page 63. — 1. **"vaga de mar," la mar alta:** "*sea*"*:* the high waves produced by the bursting of a storm.

2. **á los dos días del suceso,** *two days after the event.* Cf. page 36, note 2.

3. **bien á su pesar,** *much against his will,* lit. "in his despite."

4. **allí había andado una mano alevosa,** *a treacherous hand had been at work in the matter.*

5. **á su entender,** *in his opinion.*

Page 64. — 1. **haciendo lo posible,** *doing his best.*

2. **ni mucho menos,** *far from it.*

3. **mostró tomar parte muy principal,** *evinced very great sympathy, gave evidence of sharing very deeply.*

4. **sin soltar,** *without uttering.*

5. **á lo mejor,** *suddenly, all at once.* Usually of something disagreeable.

Page 65. — 1. **valía tanto como,** *was equivalent to.*

2. **comenzó á correr . . . la especie,** *the rumor began to spread through the town without any one knowing who had started it.* With *saber* supply the indefinite subject *nadie*, cf. page 3, note 5. *Soltara*, the so-called first impf. or conditional subjunctive is by derivation a plpf. indicative (Lat. *-averam* > *-aram* > *-ara*). This value still persists, but is confined to rather elevated style, and is usually, though not always, found in dependent clauses, not necessarily, however, in relative clauses alone. *Soltar una especie*, "to launch a suggestion," "throw out a feeler," "start a report."

3. **puso . . . el dedo en la llaga,** *solved the mystery, struck the nail on the head,* lit. "laid her finger on the wound."

4. **Irritósele la bilis,** *her wrath was roused,* lit. "bile."

Page 66. — 1. **con los brazos en jarra,** *with arms akimbo,* lit. "like (the handles of) a jug or jar."

Page 67. — 1. **quedaban rotas,** *would be broken.* Cf. page 12, note 4.

2. **Con esto . . . relaciones,** *At this José was sorrowful and alarmed, expecting that at any time a disturbance might arise which would destroy his already uncertain relations. Armar,* lit. "to stir up," "set up."

Page 68. — 1. **¡Peldóneme!** = *¡Perdóneme!*

2. **malicia,** *cunning.*

3. **no sacará nada en limpio,** *you will not get to the bottom of it,* lit. "bring nothing out clearly."

4. **hasta la evidencia,** *beyond a doubt,* lit. "up to (the point of) evidentness."

Page 69. — 1. **por no habérselo . . . al idiota,** *at not having been able to find it out from the idiot, "get it out of him."*

2. **Allá voy,** *I am coming.*

3. **encontraría, vería.** Cf. page 49, note 5.

4. **¿Para verte . . . que te ha quedado?** *The better to see that old hag's face that you've got?*

5. **acicate,** *sting, spur.*

Page 70. — 1. **el marica de D. Cándido,** *D. Cándido the old woman. Marica* is applied to effeminate men and to such as interfere in woman's business. *De* denotes apposition. *Cándido* = simpleton.

2. **velar las injurias,** *veiling one's insults.*

3. **descubrirse,** *laying oneself open* (*to prosecution*).

Page 71. — 1. **un tanto,** *somewhat.*

2. **¿Que me he comido . . . tragaderas!** *So I ate up your son's fishing-smack, did I? I didn't think I could swallow so large a mouthful!* lit. "had so good a gullet."

Page 72. — 1. **sentar plaza,** *enlist.*

2. **doy parte,** *I shall inform.*

3. **un soberbio mojicón de mano vuelta,** *a tremendous back-handed blow.* For *soberbio,* cf. Fr. *fier* used in the same sense.

4. **por no soltar la tajada,** *not to let go the money,* lit. "slice." Cf. *tener una buena tajada* = "to have a good thing of it."

5. **ya pareció aquello!** *it's out at last,* lit. "that (i.e. the real reason) has appeared."

6. **echar las uñas á,** *get your claws on.*

Page 73. — 1. **Lámete . . . hocico untado,** *Lick yourself, poor thing, for your snout is greasy.* There is a sub-sense of "undeceive yourself" in this expression; *untar la cara, el casco* = "to flatter."

2. **á mansalva** = *á mano salva, without risk.*

3. **sin caérsele la sonrisa de los labios,** *without the smile leaving her lips.*

4. **por lo visto,** *evidently.*

5. **aquello.** The allusion is to the disgrace brought upon Teresa by her lover, the father of José.

6. **¡Será terca esta mujer!** *Isn't this woman obstinate!* Cf. page 8, note 11.

Page 74. — 1. **hacer alto,** *stop, halt.*

2. **esgrimiendo,** *wielding.*

3. **¡Anda, anda . . . y revientes!** *Begone, begone: go home and take lime-tea and orange-flower, lest you get the palsy and burst. Tila y azahar* is a popular remedy for hysteria and nervousness. *No sea cosa que* = *no sea que.*

Page 75. — 1. **que demandase judicialmente,** *her bringing action against.*

2. **no se le conocían más bienes de fortuna,** *he was not known to have other worldly goods.*

Page 76. — 1. **sacaba el maleficio al que no podía usar del matrimonio,** *she removed the spell from such as could not consummate marriage.*

Page 77. — 1. **José el de la viuda,** *José, the widow's (son).*

2. **No será tanto,** *It can't be so bad (as you think).*

3. **á eso de las nueve,** *about 9 o'clock.* Cf. page 11, note 5.

4. **hasta la hubo de ciento treinta,** *there were even some with 130.* For this distributive use of the pron. cf. page 40, note 1. A singular noun is sometimes used in the same way.

5. **al otro igual,** *the next the same.*

Page 78. — 1. **¿No sabes una cosa?** *Haven't you heard the news?*

2. **no les arriendo la ganancia,** *I would not be in the shoes of, I would not answer for the consequences to,* lit. "I'll not rent their profit."

3. **no son para dichas,** *are not [fit] to be mentioned.* The explanation of this construction, as of the use of the past part. after *después de*, etc., is that the verb *ser* is understood.

4. **Creo que daban miedo,** *I should think they were frightful.*

5. **relamiéndose interiormente,** *with inward relish. Relamerse*, lit. "to lick one's lips."

Page 79. — 1. **cual si . . . carne de gallina**, *as if the monster were getting gooseflesh.* Cf. Fr. *chair de poule.*

2. **raba,** *codfish-roe.*

Page 80. — 1. **puesto que** = *aunque.*

2. **cae,** *comes up.*

3. **envoltura,** *veil, wrapping.*

4. **se indicó el contraste,** *there were signs of a sudden change of wind* [to foul].

Page 81. — 1. **Á partir de esta hora,** *from now on.*

2. **desaladas,** *eager, breathless.* Cf. page 8, note 3.

Page 82. — 1. **en vuelta de,** *toward, in the direction of.* Also *la vuelta de.*

2. **borriquete de proa,** *foretopsail.*

Page 83. — 1. **salsa,** *spray.*

2. **Phs,** *Pshaw!* Also written *ps!* Expressive of scorn or indifference.

3. **concha,** *bay, harbor.*

4. **á medio izar,** cf. page 18, note 5.

Page 84. — 1. **Nicolás de la Tejera,** cf. page 77, note 1.

Page 86. — 1. **¡Vaya todo por Dios!** *God's will be done.*

2. **con muchísimo ojo,** *with the greatest vigilance.*

3. **que no nos llegaba la camisa al cuerpo,** *when we were beside ourselves with fear.*

4. **dió vuelta,** *capsized.*

Page 87. — 1. **morral,** *lubber, booby.*

2. **¡La lástima fué ésa!** *A pity you didn't!*

3. **arriasteis de plan,** *lower flat.*

4. **estaba la mar . . . dulces con ella,** *the sea could be controlled at will*, lit. "was (in a condition) for us to make sweetmeats out of it."

5. **rascándote la barriga,** *scratching your paunch,* i.e. "idling."
6. **disteis fondo,** *cast anchor.*

Page 88. — 1. **hasta el tope,** *to the dregs,* lit. "to the top," hence "fully," "completely."

Page 89. — 1. **percance,** *accident, mishap.*
2. **todo lo bien que,** *as well as.*

Page 90. — 1. **no había sacado . . . jergón,** *had not gotten even a wretched straw tick* [*out of it*].
2. **serían, añadiese, importaría.** This use of simple for compound tense is quite common when a negative is expressed or implied. The effect is to render the diction more graphic.

Page 91. — 1. **que no existe . . . desgracia.** Dante, Inferno, V, ll. 121, ff.:

. . . Nessun maggior dolore,
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria; . . .

2. **más adelante,** *later on.*
3. **andar suelta,** *circulate freely.*

Page 92. — 1. **no consentía . . . pareados,** *did not allow of their walking abreast.*

Page 93. — 1. **En esto,** *Meanwhile.*

Page 94. — 1. **me las vas á pagar todas,** *you are going to pay up for everything.* Cf. page 1, note 4.
2. **los lances de la faena,** *the vicissitudes of the task.*

Page 95. — 1. **desde muy antiguo,** *from of old.*
2. **acaso acaso,** *perhaps, who knows?* Repetition to express emphasis or the superlative idea is a characteristic Romance construction, cf. Fr. *beaucoup beaucoup.*

Page 96. — 1. **se daba traza para ir tirando,** *contrived to get along,* lit. "found means to go pulling (along)."
2. **patinejo,** *little yard.*
3. **prenda,** *article of dress.*
4. **el derecho de pernada,** *seignorial right.* This is the *jus primae noctis, droit du seigneur, Herrenrecht,* according to which the bride of a vassal belonged, for the wedding night, to the feudal

lord. The existence of this right as a part of the feudal system is a moot question. Dr. Vicente de la Fuente, quoted by Karl Schmidt, *Jus Primae Noctis*, Freiburg, 1881, p. 56, says: "Entre nosotros no fué conocido ese derecho inmoral y abominable." Schmidt indeed, as the result of a thorough historical investigation, characterizes the custom as a legend and a "learned superstition."

Page 97. — 1. **pasando "las de Caín,"** *having "a deuce of a time,"* lit. "passing through the [experiences] of Cain," i.e. living like Cain after the murder of his brother, in similar gloom and isolation.

2. **pugilato,** *struggle.*

Page 98. — 1. **en torno suyo,** *around him.*

Page 99. — 1. **no suponen nada,** *matter nothing.*

2. **trozos,** *parts, places.*

3. **á paso de lobo,** *stealthily.* Cf. Fr. *à pas de loup.*

Page 100. — 1. **si á los jóvenes les diese por,** *if the young people should take it into their heads to, if it should occur to them to.*

2. **al poco rato de estar allí,** *when he had been there a little while.*

3. **copudos,** *umbrageous, with spreading top.*

4. **dando la espalda,** *turning their backs.*

5. **de algunos días á esta parte,** *for some days past.* Note the habit of thought in this and similar expressions (e.g. *ae poco acá,* "recently"), which starts from a point in the past and comes down to the present.

Page 101. — 1. **que no te salía la voz del cuerpo,** *since you sang.*

2. **redoble,** *patter,* lit. "repetition."

Page 102. — 1. **Y antes tampoco,** *Nor before either.*

2. **daba lástima verlo,** *he was a pitiful sight.*

Page 103. — 1. **Me da el corazón,** *My heart tells me.*

2. **La de la Luz,** short for *La de Santa María de la Luz.*

Page 104. — 1. **sesgo,** *trend.*

2. **por lo bajo,** *in an undertone.*

3. **el gran tacaño,** *the great scoundrel.* This phrase is the popular title of the famous picaresque novel of Quevedo: "Historia de la vida del buscón llamado Don Pablos, Ejemplo de vagamundos y Espejo de tacaños."

4. **echársela de rumboso,** *to play the generous.*

5. **echar todo el vaso al cuerpo,** *to drink the whole glass.*

6. **en un decir Jesús,** *in an instant,* "*before you could say Jack Robinson.*"

7. **y anda que . . . del todo,** *and upon my word Ramona didn't behave at all badly either.*

8. **le echó mano,** *laid hands on him.*

Page 105. — 1. **asustara.** Cf. page 65, note 2.

Page 106. — 1. **nos estamos poniendo como una sopa,** *we are getting sopping wet.*

2. **un noble, cuanto singular proyecto,** *a project as noble as* (*it was*) *unique. Cuanto* thus used includes its antecedent correlative *tanto.*

Page 107. — 1. **dar una vuelta,** *take a walk.*

2. **se echó á la calle,** *started into the street.*

3. **Vamos á ver . . . ¿verdad?** *Let us see, José, you must be somewhat hard up for money, aren't you?*

Page 108. — 1. **Phs . . . así así,** *Oh, tolerably,* "*so so.*"

2. **No solo de pan vive el hombre,** a paraphrase of the famous Biblical passage. In the Spanish Bible it is, in Deut. 8, 3: *El hombre no vivirá de solo pan;* in Matt. 4, 4: *No con solo el pan vivirá el hombre,* and in Luke 4, 4: *No con pan solo vivirá el hombre.*

3. **Con Elisa . . . nada ya,** *I haven't anything to do with Elisa now.*

4. **estás en amores con Elisa,** *you and Elisa are sweethearts.*

5. **mucha mayor.** Note that *mucho* and *poco,* when modifying a singular comparative, agree like adjectives if a feminine noun follow.

Page 109. — 1. **la reconquista,** *the reconquest* (of Spain from the Moors).

2. **corregidor,** *chief magistrate, town governor.* An officer of the Crown, originally holding an authority concurrent with that of

the *regidores* or councillors, but who gradually usurped the whole municipal government.

3. **su ilustrísima,** *his lordship.*

4. **á allá,** *over there, thither.*

Page 110. — 1. **Cuando á un Meira . . . ceja y ceja,** *When a Meira takes something into his head,* lit. "between eyebrow and eyebrow."

2. **deja lo demás de mi cuenta,** *leave the rest to me.*

3. **el mes que viene,** *the coming month.*

Page 111. — 1. **dar un saleo,** *take a boat-ride. Salearse por el mar* is parallel to *pasearse por la tierra.*

2. **pásate por mi casa,** *call at my house.*

3. **gestionar,** *negotiate.*

4. **todo se volvía . . . de su casa,** *he did nothing but speculate as he made his way home,* lit. "all (the affair) turned into brooding."

5. **en tanto que no,** *until.*

Page 112. — 1. **las Consistoriales,** *the town-hall.* Supply *casas.*

Page 114. — 1. **miraba de hito en hito,** *looked fixedly at.*

2. **Como . . . se callase.** Cf. page 20, note 3.

3. **se creyó en el caso de,** *thought himself in a position to.*

Page 115. — 1. **cuarteles,** *quarterings.*

2. **punto de honor,** *honor point.*

3. **azur y banda de plata . . . arminios de sable,** *azure, a bend argent, with dragons' heads or; a bordure argent, with eight ermines sable.*

4. **gules y una puente . . . cruces llanas de azur,** *gules, a bridge argent with three arches, through which runs a mighty river; and a tower or ascendant from the midst of the bridge; a bordure argent and eight plain crosses azure.*

5. **la primera de plata . . . al pie del tronco,** *the first argent, a lion rampant sable; the second or, a tree issuant from a mound and in foliage, with a bird placed upon the top and a dog baying at the foot of the trunk.*

Page 116. — 1. **de plata . . . en sautor,** *argent, five ravens sable in saltire.*

2. **de oro y un castillo . . . en la punta,** *or, a castle gules in base, surmounted by a warrior armed with a halberd, naissant from the turret, accompanied by five roundlets vert and argent, placed two on each side and one at the point.*

3. **la orden de Santiago.** One of the three great military orders of Spain: Calatrava, Santiago and Alcántara.

4. **jurado,** *jurat.* The jurats were a body who watched, in the interests of the inhabitants, the proceedings of the *regidores*, raising protests against unpopular measures.

5. **procurador en las Cortes de Toro,** *deputy to the parliament of Toro.* Two important parliaments sat at this city, summoned by Henry II, of Trastamara, in 1369 and 1371.

6. **Consejo de Italia.** An administrative council for the Spanish possessions in Italy, established by Charles V in 1555.

7. **oidor de la real Audiencia,** *judge of the royal court of appeal.*

8. **regidor,** *ruler.*

Page 117. — 1. **La luna rielaba su pálida luz,** *The pale light of the moon gleamed,* lit. "The moon made its pale light to sparkle." *Rielar* is usually intransitive.

2. **Vamos allá,** *Let us to work.*

Page 118. — 1. **haciéndole falta,** *when you need it,* i.e. the money (*cuartos*).

2. **descompuesto,** *violent.*

Page 119. — 1. **subió todavía algunos palmos,** *rose several degrees higher,* lit. several spans more. Cf. Fr. *encore quelques . . .*

2. **Renacimiento,** *Renaissance.*

3. **á fuer de verídicos,** *on our word as a truthful author.*

Page 120. — 1. **desperdicios,** *largess.*

2. **por si,** *if, in case.*

3. **que . . . sacase un rédito,** *for him to set up a nice little shop and get an income from it.*

4. **nada,** *nothing of the sort.*

5. **cuatro días,** *a few, a couple of days.* *Cuatro* is used as an indefinite numeral.

6. **al paso,** *going along, passing by.*

7. **cartuchito,** *little paper* [*roll*].

8. **los buenos tiempos de la casa de Austria,** the 16th and 17th

centuries, during which the Spanish branch of the house of Austria occupied the throne.

Page 121. — 1. **subían de punto,** *increased.*

2. **por dos ó tres veces,** *twice or thrice over.*

3. **discreteos,** *conceits, clever speeches.*

4. **fe de bautismo,** *certificate of baptism.*

5. **á la mayor brevedad,** *very shortly.*

Page 122. — 1. **camarín,** *shrine.*

2. **pusiese,** *made offering of.*

3. **sin probar bocado,** *without tasting a mouthful.*

Page 123. — 1. **¡Calle!** *Strange!*

2. **echó á andar en pos de ella,** *began to follow her.*

3. **uña y carne de,** *hand and glove with*, lit. "nail and flesh."

4. **esa cara de mosquita muerta,** *that innocent-looking face of yours. Mosquita muerta*, "demure person," "hypocrite."

5. **Yo te arreglaré, buena pieza,** *I'll settle you, my fine girl.*

6. **á pie juntillas,** *firmly, tenaciously*, lit. "with feet together." Also *á pie juntillo.*

Page 124. — 1. **desabrimiento,** *estrangement.*

Page 125. — 1. **ves** = *vé, go.* This colloquial form of the imperative is parallel to the French forms in *-s* of the first conj., found before *en* and *y*, e.g. *donnes-en, vas-y.* The form *vas* is even found under the same condition as here, viz. before the preposition *à*, e.g. *vas à la veillée*, Mérimée, Colomba, C. XII. Indicative influence is the usual explanation.

2. **para bruja,** *to be a witch, "for a witch,"* cf. page 78, note 3.

3. **¡cómo saca los pies de las alforjas!** *how bold she's getting!* lit. "getting her feet out of the saddle-bags."

4. **pichona,** *sweetheart, dove.*

Page 126. — 1. **á cuestas,** *on her shoulders.*

2. **¡Qué he de ser buena!** *Good, am I?* lit. "How can I be good?"

3. **¡Si soy una bestia!** *Oh, but I am a brute!* This is the expletive use of *si* (often rendered "why"), to be explained by an ellipse, perhaps of *qué* or a verb of asking.

Page 127. — 1. **dieron en el pueblo,** *reached the town, "struck the town."*

Page 128. — 1. **cuando,** *if.*

2. **ponerlo en vías de obra,** *begin its realization,* cf. page 40, note 3.

3. **que el castillo viniese en socorro del estado llano,** *that the nobility should come to the aid of the commons.*

4. **ni menos,** *much less.*

Page 129. — 1. **y así por el estilo,** *and so on,* lit. "and thus in the (same) style."

2. **Quedamos en eso,** *Agreed,* lit. "We abide by that."

3. **á desobedecer . . . contigo.** This right of sequestration of a minor for the purpose of contracting marriage when the parents refuse their consent without just cause is a feature of Spanish law. The institution is sufficiently explained by the episode which follows.

4. **empeño,** *trouble, effort.*

Page 130. — 1. **la guerra de América.** The reference is to the conquests of Cortés, Pizarro, etc.

2. **se descarriase,** *should lose himself in digressions,* lit. "go astray."

Page 131. — 1. **solicitud,** *petition.*

Page 132. — 1. **en achaque de letras,** *in the matter of learning.*

2. **no puedo menos de,** *I cannot help,* lit. "can (do) no less than."

3. **al cabo,** *after all.* Cf. above, where the usual meaning, "at last," fits better.

4. **fuera de sí,** *beside himself.*

Page 133. — 1. **al tanto de,** *familiar with.* Cf. page 8, note 5.

2. **lo que procede,** *the manner of proceeding.*

3. **se ratifica en,** *confirms.*

Page 134. — 1. **entre luz y luz,** *at twilight.* Also *entre dos luces.*

2. **Quedamos . . . en que.** Cf. page 129, note 2.

Page 135. — 1. **bastón,** *staff.*

2. **estuvo para huir,** *was on the point of escaping.*

Page 136. — 1. **á primera hora,** *early.*

2. **baqueta,** *sole-leather.* Also *vaqueta.*

3. **por,** *in, out of.*

4. **cosa que lo valga,** *something of the sort,* lit. "something to equal it."

5. **dado . . . la vuelta al pueblo,** *gone the round of the town.*

Page 137. — 1. **llorar con,** *weep over.* Cf. page 34, note 2.

2. **estaba constipado,** *had a cold.*

3. **un príncipe de malísimas pulgas,** *a most ill-tempered prince. Pulgas,* "fleas"; hence *de malas pulgas,* "easily stung," "roused (to anger)."

4. **en qué paraba,** *how it turned out,* lit. "in what it stopped."

5. **¡cuánto pasó!** *how much she went through!*

6. **desde luego,** *forthwith.*

7. **tienes azogue,** *you are very restless,* lit. "you have quicksilver (in you)."

Page 138. — 1. **con bien,** *well, with advantage.*

2. **no lo quiso ver mejor,** *desired nothing better.*

Page 139. — 1. **siempre,** *still.*

2. **opaca,** *thick, husky.*

3. **reservado,** *one requiring circumspection.*

4. **casa,** *dwelling.*

5. **el que no se le escapasen de las órbitas,** *their not starting from their sockets.* The article *el* modifies the following noun clause.

6. **está en el celo,** *is impassioned.*

7. **á escape,** *post-haste.*

Page 140. — 1. **atusase,** *stroked.*

2. **la procesión le andaba por dentro,** *he was pretty well stirred up* [though he did not show it].

3. **se las ha arreglado,** *has arranged matters.*

Page 141. — 1. **porque si no . . . en un patatús,** *because otherwise, some fine day she would have had a fit.* Here the present tense is substituted for the compound conditional for the purpose of graphic narration. *Si no llego á bajar ayer, de fijo me manda al médico,* "If I had not gotten down-stairs yesterday, he would certainly have sent the doctor to me." Cf. page 28, note 4.

2. **¡No se van á llevar mal chasco ella y su galán!** *She and her lover are going to have no small disappointment.*

3. **que va á enfermar,** *or you'll get sick.*

4. **tenga V. presente,** *bear in mind.*

5. **había ascendido desde soldado,** *had risen from the ranks.*

Page 142. — 1. **extendía estas diligencias,** *executed these formalities.*

Page 143. — 1. **de forma que,** *so that.*

2. **que no le pesaba nada,** *who was not at all sorry.* Cf. the more usual construction two lines below. The former is however a thoroughly Spanish construction, though more common in the older language than to-day. Cf. *que estaba diciéndoles su ama,* "to whom his housekeeper was saying." D. Quijote, I, ch. V. It is in reality a sort of aposiopesis: "whom — it did not at all grieve her (dat.)."

3. **poco ni mucho,** *at all,* lit. "little or much."

4. **estamos en paz,** *the matter is settled.*

5. **sonrió con el borde de los labios,** *smiled a forced smile.* Cf. Fr. *sourire du bout des lèvres, des dents.*

6. **Á mí me daba en la nariz,** *I scented it out.*

7. **camino de,** *on the road to.*

8. **atisbaron,** *espied.*

Page 144. — 1. **en poco estuvo . . . ahogasen.** Cf. page 11, note 4

Page 145. — 1. **en tanto,** *meanwhile.*

2. **por lo pronto,** *for the time being.*

3. **dando vueltas,** *pacing up and down.*

Page 146. — 1. **la traía pesarosa,** *kept her sorrowful, troubled.*

2. **á la par,** *equally, alike.*

3. **Tal vez que otra, muy rara,** *Once in a while, very seldom.* Cf. *alguno que otro, uno que otro, tarde que temprano.* In such expressions *que* seems to have a comparative force.

Page 147. — 1. **con que se había quedado,** *which he had had left.*

2. **se habría huido por el mundo,** *might be wandering about in the world.*

Page 148. — 1. **la de la piedra de marras,** *the old [trick] with the stone. De marras,* adverbial phrase of time = "formerly," "previously."

Page 149. — 1. **dando las boqueadas,** *at the last gasp.*

2. **tornadizo,** *changeful.*

Page 150. — 1. **huraño,** *grim.*

2. **se supo de modo evidente,** *it was ascertained beyond a doubt.*

3. **la montaña,** *the mountains, mountainous country*

4. **Se dió por supuesto,** *It was taken for granted.*

5. **iría,** *was probably going.*

6. **buscar dinero á réditos,** *get money on interest.*

7. **se habría matado,** *must have got killed.*

8. **Sea de esto lo que quiera,** *Be this as it may.*

9. **caviloso,** *brooding.*

Page 151. — 1. **El tiempo vino tan recio,** *The weather came on so heavy.*

2. **revolver,** *return* (to the fishing) = *dar la vuelta.*

Page 152. — 1. **qué barbaridad!** *what frightful weather.*

2. **la mayor . . . la unción,** *the mainsail, spritsail, foresail, foretopsail and storm-trysail.*

Page 153. — 1. **da la vuelta,** *turn about.*

2. **Á cambiar,** *About ship.*

3. **¡Si no podía menos!** *Well, it couldn't be otherwise.*

Page 154. — 1. **¡Ah de la lancha!** *Ship ahoy.*

2. **¿después que yo lo puse?** *after I showed one?*

3. **sin hacer maldito el caso,** *without paying the slightest attention.*

4. **amanecen hoy,** *turn up this morning.*

5. **¿cualquiera se queda tuerto porque el vecino ciegue?** *any one will lose an eye* (lit. "become one-eyed") *that his neighbor may go blind?* i.e. will do anything to get ahead of the rest.

6. **Lo gracioso,** *The funny part of it.*

Page 155. — 1. **esos babiecas . . . con qué bueyes ara,** *those dolts think they are going to deceive each other, while here we all, wise or foolish, know only too well with what people we are dealing,* lit. ". . . he who knows most and he who knows least have their loins aching from knowing with what oxen they are ploughing." *Al que más y al que menos = al que más sepa y al que menos sepa.*

le duelen los riñones = *es cansado, hastiado; con qué bueyes ara* = *con qué gente trata.*

2. **cómo,** *how that.*

3. **otro tanto,** *the same.*

Page 156. — 1. **amarrando . . . el puño del borriquete,** *making fast the foretopsail clew.*

2. **¡Arriar en banda escotas y drizas!** *Let go amain sheets and halliards!*

3. **bien á punto,** *in the nick of time.*

4. **¡Cómo has olido el trallazo recondenado!** *How did you feel the confounded squall coming? Trallazo,* lit., "crack of the whip-lash" (*tralla*).

Page 157. — 1. **ser,** *become.*

2. **Traed,** *Raise.*

3. **arribó,** *bore away.*

Page 158. — 1. **Nada de amilanarse,** *No flinching.*

2. **así y todo,** *nevertheless, for all this.*

Page 159. — 1. **de todo punto,** *quite.*

2. **temporal deshecho,** *violent storm.*

Page 160. — 1. **desarbolar del medio,** *take down the mainmast.*

2. **¡ya no hay comedia!** *the game is up.*

3. **¿hombre de Dios?** *man alive?*

4. **las asistía,** *was on their side,* lit. "attended them."

Page 161. — 1. **torcían el hocico,** *screwed up their faces.*

2. **bajo,** *shoal.*

Page 162. — 1. **cuenta de ellos,** *their affair.*

2. **¡Vaya si hay tiempo!** *Of course there's time!*

3. **corralada,** *enclosure. -Ada* has a collective force: "the yard and its contents" (of outhouses, etc.).

Page 163. — 1. **Carrero.** Some of the names applied to these *bajos* have a meaning, others seem to be fanciful. *Huesos de San Pedro* is evident. *Torno* means peg, lathe, wheel, etc. *Furada is* from *furar*, an Asturian word meaning to bore (*horadar*). *Carrero* has the meaning of driver, carter, which, however, does not seem to fit here. A meaning for *Cobanín* was not found. Indeed, *Torno* and *Carrero* also seem devoid of signification as used here.

Page 164. — 1. **escalera de caracol,** *winding stair.*

Page 165. — 1. **evasivas,** *evasions.*
2. **las altas horas de la noche,** *late into the night.*

Page 166. — 1. **Cuando Dios amaneció,** *When day broke.*
2. **un funeral,** *a funeral service.*
3. **arribado,** *put in.*

Page 167. — 1. **Allá, á la tarde,** *on in the afternoon.*

Page 168. — 1. **el esposo de su alma . . . el hijo de sus entrañas,** *their beloved husband, their darling child* (*child of their bosom*).
2. **sintió en la garganta un nudo tan estrecho,** *felt so big a lump in her throat.*
3. **por menudo,** *minutely.*
4. **las peripecias de la jornada,** *the vicissitudes of the trip.*

Page 170. — 1. **dejando señalado,** *having fixed.*

VOCABULARY

In this vocabulary words identical in Spanish and English, articles, auxiliary verbs, pronouns (except pronouns forming idioms), and words occurring but once and explained in notes on such words, have been omitted.

A

á, to, for, of, from; at, in, into, by, up to, on, as, with, toward, until, in order to; — **bordo**, on board; — **que**, until, that; — **seguro**, in safety.

abajo, down, under, underneath; below; **más** —, lower (down); **venirse** —, to fall.

abalanzar, to balance; —**se (á)**, to rush *or* dart forward.

abandonar, to abandon, release.

abatimiento, *m.*, depression, despair; **con** —, sorrowfully.

abatir, to beat down, discourage, dismay.

abierto, –**a**, *p.p.* **abrir**; opened; distended, outstretched; open, clear; **nariz** — **a**, flat *or* wide nose.

ablandar, to soften, melt; —**se**, relent.

abogado, *m.*, lawyer.

aborrecido, –**a**, hated, abhorred.

abrazar, to embrace, clasp, caress.

abreviar, to shorten, cut short; hasten, hurry.

abrigar, to shelter, protect, cover; —**se**, to take shelter.

abrigo, *m.*, shelter, cover.

abrir, to open, extend.

abrumar, to consume, overwhelm, oppress.

abrupto, –**a**, abrupt, rugged, broken, craggy.

absorber, to absorb, engross.

absorto, –**a**, *p.p.* **absorber**; amazed, dumbfounded.

abuelo, *m.*, grandfather, ancestor.

abundancia, *f.*, abundance, plenty.

abundar, to abound, be frequent, be plentiful.

abundoso, –**a**, abundant, plentiful, luxuriant.

aburrirse, to be bored, grow weary.

acá, here, hither, this way, to this place (*implies motion*).

acabado, –**a**, finished, complete, perfect, faultless.

acabar, to finish, complete, end, conclude; — **de** + *inf.*, to have just done (*action expressed by infinitive*); — **de decidirse**, to come to a decision; — **de desconcertar**, to completely disconcert; — **de saber**, to finally learn; **no** — **de salir de**, not to recover at all from.

académico, –**a**, learned, scholarly.

acaecer, to happen, occur, come to pass; **lo acaecido**, the occurrence.

acaloradamente, hotly, vehemently, excitedly.

acalorado, –**a**, heated, excited.

acalorarse, to grow hot *or* angry; get excited, overheated.

acariciar, to cherish, entertain, harbor; stroke.
acaso, perhaps, perchance.
acatamiento, *m.*, respect, courtesy, reverence.
accidente, *m.*, accident, sudden attack; illness.
acción, *f.*, action, gesture, gesticulation.
aceite, *m.*, (olive) oil.
acento, *m.*, accent, inflection, emphasis.
aceptar, to accept.
acerca (de), about, concerning.
acercar, to bring near; **—se (á)**, to approach.
acero, *m.*, steel.
acertar (á), to succeed; happen.
aciago, -a, sad, ominous.
acobardar, to daunt, dismay.
acoger, to receive, accept.
acogida, *f.*, reception,
acometer, to attack, assail, beset; undertake, begin.
acompañar, to accompany, join, attend.
acompasadamente, rhythmically.
acongojado, -a, oppressed, afflicted, agonized.
aconsejar, to advise, counsel, charge.
acontecer, to happen, come about.
acontecimiento, *m.*, event, occurrence, circumstance.
acordar, to agree; **—se (de)**, to remember, recollect.
acostarse, to go to bed, lie down, retire.
acostumbrado, -a, customary, habitual, usual.
acostumbrar, to accustom; be accustomed, used.
acreedor, -a, deserving, worthy.
acreedor, *m.*, creditor; recipient.
actitud, *f.*, attitude, posture, position.
acto, *m.*, act, action.
acudir (á), to repair to, run to, come forward; apply, appeal.
acuerdo, *etc.*, *v.* **acordar.**
acusar, to witness, give evidence of, indicate, acknowledge.
achacar, to attribute, impute, charge, ascribe.
achicar, to bail.
adecuado, -a, adequate, fitting.
adelantado, -a, advanced, bold.
adelante, ahead, forward, onward; **hacia —**, forward, in front, before (one).
ademán, *m.*, gesture, manner, attitude; **en — de**, in the attitude of; **como en — de**, as if.
además, besides, moreover, anyhow, likewise.
adentro, in, inside, within, inner.
aderezar, to prepare, arrange, dress, cook.
adiós, good-bye, farewell.
adivinar, to divine, guess, conjecture. [der.
admiración, *f.*, admiration, wonder.
adolecer, to suffer, be seized (w. illness), fall sick; succumb; **— de rabia**, to be overcome by rage.
adoptar, to adopt, assume.
adoratorio, *m.*, oratory, chapel.
adornado, -a, adorned, embellished.
adquirir, to acquire, obtain, get.
adulador, -a, flattering, fawning.
adusto, -a, dark, gloomy.
adversario, *m.*, adversary.
advertencia, *f.*, remark, warning.
advertido, -a, warned, on one's guard, made cautious.
advertir (de), to notice, note, apprise, acquaint, give notice *or* evidence; show, betoken.
advierto, *etc.*, *v.* **advertir.**
advirtió, *etc.*, *v.* **advertir.**
afablemente, courteously, cordially, pleasantly.

afán, *m.*, eagerness, anxiety, solicitude.
afectar, to influence, impress; affect, pretend, feign.
aferrar, to catch.
afición, *f.*, affection, fondness, attachment.
afilado, -a, sharp.
afirmación, *f.*, statement, assertion.
afirmar, to declare, assert, maintain.
afirmativo, -a, affirmative, consenting.
afligirse, to grieve, worry, repine.
aflojar, to let go, loosen, relax.
afortunadamente, luckily.
afortunado, -a, fortunate, lucky.
afuera, out, outside.
afueras, *f. pl.* outskirts, environs.
agarrar, to grasp; **—se (á)**, to lay hold of, clutch, seize, hold on to.
agitación, *f.*, agitation, excitement, disturbance, fluctuation.
agitar, to move, shake, wave, sway, flutter; agitate, excite.
agosto, *m.*, August.
agotar, to exhaust, tire.
agradecer, to be grateful for, acknowledge, thank.
agradecido, -a, grateful, thankful.
agradecimiento, *m.*, gratitude.
agrado, *m.*, pleasure, satisfaction, content, liking.
agradezco, *etc.*, *v.* **agradecer**.
agregar, to add, join.
agua, *f.*, water, the sea; **entre aguas**, sunk to the level of the water, swamped.
aguantar, to bear, suffer, endure.
aguardar, to await, expect; **—se**, to wait.
agudo, -a, sharp, piercing, keen, acute.
agüero, *m.*, sign, omen; **de buen —**, lucky.
águila, *f.*, eagle.
aguileño, -a, aquiline.
agujero, *m.*, hole.
aguzar, to sharpen.
aherrojado, -a, in chains, in irons.
ahí, there, yonder; **de —**, thence.
ahijada, *f.*, goddaughter.
ahogar, to smother, choke, strangle; drown; **—se**, to be suffocated, drowned.
ahora, now, at present, just now; **— mismo**, this very minute; **por —**, for the present.
ahorcar, to hang.
ahorrar, to save, economize.
ahorro, *m.*, frugality, economy; parsimony.
ahuecar, to deepen, to make hollow.
ahuyentar, to banish, dispel.
airado, -a, wrathful, furious, angry.
aire, *m.*, air, atmosphere, wind; **al — libre**, outdoors, in the fresh air.
aislado, -a, isolated, separated.
ajar, to spoil, mar.
ajeno, -a, another's, one's neighbor's.
alabado, -a, praised.
alargar, to extend, reach out.
alarma, *f.*, alarm.
alarmar, to alarm, rouse.
albañil, *m.*, mason, bricklayer.
alborotarse, to get excited, become agitated *or* disturbed; be roused.
alcalde, *m.*, mayor, justice of the peace.
alcanzar (á), to obtain, attain, acquire; reach, overtake, come up to; succeed.
alcoba, *f.*, alcove, bed-room.
aldea, *f.*, village.
aldeana, *f.*, village maid, countrywoman.

alegrar, to comfort, cheer, enliven; **—se (de),** to be glad, rejoice.
alegre, gay, happy, cheerful.
alegremente, cheerfully, merrily, brightly.
alegría, *f.*, joy, pleasure, mirth, rejoicing, festivity.
alejar, to drive *or* put away, remove, separate; **—se (de),** to go off, get away, withdraw.
aletargado, -a, lethargic, inactive, dull.
alfombra, *f.*, carpet.
alforja, *f.*, saddle-bag.
algodón, *m.*, cotton.
alguacil, *m.*, bailiff, constable, sheriff.
alguien, somebody, some one.
alianza, *f.*, alliance.
aliento, *m.*, breath.
alimentar, to feed, nourish, support, cherish.
alimento, *m.*, food, nourishment.
aliño, *m.*, neatness, tidiness; elaborateness.
alma, *f.*, soul, spirit; mind, heart; human being; *pl.*, people, persons; **con — y vida,** with heart and soul.
almendra, *f.*, almond.
Alonso, *m.*, Alonzo, Alphonso.
alquitrán, *m.*, tar, liquid pitch.
altamente, highly, exceedingly.
altar mayor, *m.*, high altar.
alternativamente, alternately.
altivo, -a, haughty, proud, lofty.
alto, -a, tall, high, elevated; eminent, illustrious.
¡alto! halt! stop!
altura, *f.*, high seas, open sea.
alumbrar, to light.
alzar, to raise, lift up; **—se,** to rise, get up.
allá, there, thither, to *or* in that place; **más —,** further; (*implies motion*).
allí, there, yonder, in that place (*implies rest*).
ama, *f.*, housekeeper.
amabilidad, *f.*, amiability, cordiality, courtesy.
amable, amiable, affable.
amanecer, *m.*, dawn, daybreak.
amanecer, to dawn.
amanezca, *etc.*, *v.* **amanecer.**
amante, *m.*, lover, sweetheart.
amapola, *f.*, poppy.
amar, to love, like.
amargo, -a, bitter.
amargor, *m.*, bitterness.
amargura, *f.*, bitterness, sorrow.
amarillo, -a, yellow, golden.
amarra, *f.*, cable.
amarrar, to fasten, tie, lash, moor.
ambiente, *m.*, atmosphere, air.
ámbito, *m.*, extent, length, depths.
ambos, -as, both.
amenaza, *f.*, threat.
amenazador, -a, threatening, menacing.
amenazar (con), threaten, menace.
amenidad, *f.*, agreeableness, delight, pleasantness.
ameno, -a, pleasant, agreeable, delightful, delicious.
amical, friendly, fraternal.
amigablemente, amicably.
amigo, -a, *m.* & *f.*, friend.
amigo, -a, friendly, fond, willing.
amistad, *f.*, friendship.
amistoso, -a, friendly, cordial.
amo, *m.*, master, owner, proprietor.
amonestación, *f.*, warning, advice, admonition.
amontonar, to heap, pile up, gather.
amor, *m.*, love, affection; **— propio,** self-love, conceit.
amoroso, -a, amorous.
amparar, to aid, shelter, protect.
amparo, *m.*, shelter, protection, refuge.

amplio, -a, ample, large, extensive.
amplitud, *f.*, extent, size.
amurar, to tack.
anciano, -a, old, aged.
ancla, *f.*, anchor.
anclar, to anchor.
ancho, -a, broad, wide, large.
andar, to walk, come, go, go on; to be; **¡anda!** here! well! I tell you! be gone, off with you!
anduviese, *etc.*, *v.* **andar.**
anegarse, to sink.
anejo, -a, annexed, joined, attached.
angelito, *m.*, cherub.
angosto, -a, narrow, limited.
angustia, *f.*, agony, anguish, affliction.
angustiado, -a, wretched, miserable, worried, in anguish.
angustioso, -a, difficult, distressing, painful.
anhelo, *m.*, anxiety, eagerness.
anidar, to nest, nestle.
animal, *m.*, animal, beast; dolt, booby.
animar (á), to encourage, animate, incite, urge; **—se,** to feel encouraged, hopeful, grow animated; *p. 164, l. 11,* **animadas,** quickened, fanned.
ánimo, *m.*, mind, thought; intention; courage, spirit, bravery.
animoso, -a, brave, daring, courageous.
anochecer, to grow dark.
anochezca, *etc.*, *v.* **anochecer.**
anonadar, to annihilate.
ansia, *f.*, anxiety, longing.
ansiar, to desire earnestly, long for, crave.
ansiedad, *f.*, anxiety, eagerness.
ansiosamente, anxiously, uneasily, eagerly.
ansioso, -a, anxious, solicitous, careful.
ante, before.
antepasado, *m.*, ancestor, predecessor.
anterior, —, former, previous, preceding.
antes (de), *prep.*, before, prior to; *adv. & conj.*, before, first; **— de que,** before; **— que,** rather than, sooner than.
antigüedad, *f.*, antiquity, age; priority.
antiguo, -a, antique, old, ancient; **desde muy —,** *v. p. 95, n. 1.*
antipatía, *f.*, antipathy, dislike, repugnance.
antojarse, to fancy, take a notion to.
antojo, *m.*, fancy, whim, caprice.
Antonio, *m.*, Anthony.
anual, annual, yearly.
anudado, -a, knotted, tied.
anuencia, *f.*, consent, permission.
anunciar, to announce, proclaim.
anzuelo, *m.*, (fish-)hook.
añadir, to add, join.
año, *m.*, year.
apacible, peaceable, mild, inoffensive.
apagado, -a, dull, faint; submissive.
apagar, to put out, extinguish, destroy, quench; smother (a laugh); **—se,** to go out, grow dim.
apalabrado, -a, bespoken, engaged.
aparato, *m.*, pomp, display, ceremony, formality.
aparecer, to appear, seem, look, show up.
aparejado, -a, ready, rigged, equipped.
aparejo, *m.*, equipment, furnishing; gear, tackle, rigging; instruments, apparatus.
aparentar, to appear, pretend.

aparente, apparent, evident, seeming.
apariencia, *f.*, appearance, look.
apartado, -a, separated, retired, distant.
apartar, to put away, banish, dismiss; dislodge, remove, separate; **—se (de),** to leave, withdraw (from), quit, go off.
aparte, apart, aside.
apasionado, -a, passionate, intense, devoted.
apego, *m.*, attachment, fondness.
apelar, to have recourse to, appeal.
apenado, -a, pained, grieved, saddened.
apenas, hardly, scarcely, no sooner than, as soon as.
apesadumbrado, -a, anxious, grieved, sad.
apesadumbrarse, to grieve, worry, be troubled.
apesar (de que), in spite of, although.
apetecer, to desire, long for, crave.
apetito, *m.*, appetite, hunger.
aplacarse, to grow calm.
aplanchado, -a, pressed, ironed, smoothed.
aplazar, to put off, postpone, [defer.
aplicación, *f.*, assiduity, laboriousness, perseverance.
aplicar (en), to apply, give.
apocado, -a, weak, abject, mean.
apoderarse (de), to take possession of, seize.
apología, *f.*, apology, defense, eulogy.
apostar (á), to bet, wager.
apostrofar, to address.
apoyar, to rest, lean; support, substantiate, back; **—se,** to lean (upon).
apoyo, *m.*, help, support.
apreciar, to appreciate, value, esteem.
aprecio, *m.*, appreciation, regard, esteem.
apremiante, pressing, urgent.
aprender, to learn; hear about.
apresuradamente, hastily, hurriedly.
apresurarse (á), to hasten, hurry, make haste.
apretadamente, fast, closely, tightly.
apretado, -a, close, dense, tight.
apretar, to squeeze, tighten; urge, hasten, quicken (one's step).
aprieto, *m.*, stringency, difficulty; distress, affliction; *pl.*, straits, difficulties, embarassments; **último —,** last extremity.
aprisionar, to imprison, take possession of.
aprobar, to approve.
apropiado, -a, fit, suitable, appropriate; characteristic.
aprovechar, to take advantage of, make use of, profit by; **—se (de),** to avail oneself of.
aproximar, to approach.
aptitud, *f.*, aptitude, ability, fitness.
apuestas, *etc.*, *v.* **apostar.**
apuntado, -a, pointed.
apuntar, to mark, jot down; remark, put in, point out, hint; begin to appear (daylight).
apurar, to drain; push, press; **—se,** to fret.
apuro, *m.*, difficulty, strait, tight place.
aquí, here, in this place, hither; (*implies rest*); **hasta —,** until now.
aquilatar, to estimate, examine.
árbol, *m.*, tree, mast.
arcano, -a, secret, hidden, unfathomable, obscure, unknown.
arder, to burn, blaze, glow.

ardid, *m.*, trick, device, stratagem.
ardiente, ardent, glowing, gleaming, fiery.
ardientemente, ardently, fervently.
arduo, -a, arduous, difficult
arena, *f.*, sand.
arenoso, -a, sandy.
aritmética, *f.*, arithmetic.
armas, *f. pl.*, arms; coat of arms.
armador, *m.*, ship-owner.
armar, to put together, mount; set up, raise.
arquear, to raise, arch.
arraigado, -a, rooted, fixed.
arrancar (á) (*pers. indir. obj.*), to snatch, jerk, tear; pull out *or* up, draw up; wrest; carry off.
arranque, *m.*, fit, burst.
arrastrado, -a, drawn out, lingering, lengthened, slow.
arrastrar, to drag *or* draw (up).
arrebatado, -a, impetuous, rash, hasty, passionate, violent.
arrebatar (*pers. indir. obj.*), to carry off.
arreciar, to increase, grow more heavy.
arredrar, to terrify, daunt.
arreglar, to arrange, fix, settle.
arreglo, *m.*, arrangement, settlement; conformity; **con — á,** in accordance with.
arrepentido, -a, (de), repentant, regretful.
arrepentirse (de), to repent, regret.
arrepintió, *etc.*, *v.* **arrepentir.**
arriar, to let out, lower.
arriba, up, upstairs; over, overhead; above, high.
arrimarse (á), to approach; press close, lean against, crouch.
arrojar, to fling, throw, hurl, drive, cast; **—se (á),** to throw oneself into, throw *or* launch oneself upon; indulge in, have recourse to.
arrostrar, to encounter, combat, fight face to face.
arroyo, *m.*, brook, rivulet, small stream, creek.
arruinar, to ruin, destroy.
arte, *m. & f.*, art; trade, profession; skill, cunning.
artefacto, *m.*, construction, device.
articular, to articulate, say, utter, pronounce distinctly.
asaltar, to occur suddenly, surprise, seize; assail.
ascender, to ascend, mount, climb; **— (á),** to amount to.
ascendiente, ancestor, forefather.
asegurar, to affirm, assert.
asentimiento, *m.*, assent, consent.
asentir, to assent, acquiesce.
asfixiado, -a, smothered, suffocated.
así, thus, in this *or* that way *or* manner, so; so that, therefore; **— que,** so, so that; as soon as.
asiduo, -a, assiduous, persistent, habitual.
asilo, *m.*, refuge, shelter.
asimismo, likewise, in like manner, exactly so, also.
asintió, *etc.*, *v.* **asentir.**
asistir (á), to attend, go to.
asno, *m.*, ass.
asomado, -a, peeping, peering out.
asomar, to (begin to) appear, peep out, look out, bob up; **—se (á),** to peep out of *or* into.
asombrar, to obscure, shade; astonish; terrify, frighten; **—se,** to wonder.
asombro, *m.*, astonishment, wonder, amazement; dread, terror.
aspecto, *m.*, aspect, look, appearance.

ásperamente, harshly, severely.
áspero, –a, bitter, severe, harsh, rough.
aspirar, to breathe, take in.
asta, *f.*, horn.
astucia, *f.*, shrewdness, cunning.
asturiano, –a, Asturian.
astuto, –a, artful, shrewd, cunning.
asunto, *m.*, matter, affair, business.
asustar, to frighten, terrify; **—se,** to be frightened.
atajar, to cut short, stop, intercept, interrupt.
atar, to tie (up); confine.
atascar, to stop up, choke.
atemorizado, –a, afraid, appalled, dismayed, daunted.
atención, *f.*, attention, heed; kindness, courtesy.
atender (á), to attend (to); take care of; hearken, listen, heed.
atenerse, to hold to, abide by; **á que —** (*v.* **saber**), to know the real truth.
atentamente, attentively, carefully.
atento, –a, attentive, heedful.
aterrador, –a, terrible, frightful.
aterrar, to terrify, appal, make cower.
atesar, to haul taut, brace, tighten, fasten.
atestado, –a, crowded, crammed, jammed, thronged.
atiende, *etc.*, *v.* **atender.**
atmósfera, *f.*, atmosphere, air.
atormentar, to torment, plague, harass.
atornillar, to screw.
atrancar, to bar, bolt.
atrás, back, backward.
atravesar, to go through, cross over; lay *or* place across.
atreverse (á), to dare, venture.
atrevido, –a, daring, bold, intrepid, venturesome.
atribuir, to attribute, ascribe.
atribulado, –a, troubled, distressed, harassed.
atributo, *m.*, emblem.
Atridas, Atrides.
atrocidad, *f.*, atrocity, cruelty.
atropellado, –a, trampled upon, run over.
atroz, atrocious, flagrant.
aturdir, to bewilder, confuse, dull, daze.
aumentar, to augment, increase.
aun, aún, even, still, yet, further, nevertheless.
aunar, to unite, join.
aunque, although, notwithstanding.
aurora, *f.*, dawn.
ausencia, *f.*, absence, lack.
auspicio, *m.*, auspice.
autor, –a, *m.* & *f.*, author, perpetrator.
autoridad, *f.*, authority, power.
autorizar, to authorize, permit.
auxilio, *m.*, assistance, aid, help
avanzado, lo —, the lateness.
avanzar, to advance, progress.
avaricia, *f.*, avarice, cupidity, greed.
avaro, –a, avaricious, close, niggardly.
avaro, *m.*, miser.
ave, *f.*, bird; **pluma de —,** quill, pen.
Ave, Hail!
avellana, *f.*, hazel nut, filbert.
avenirse (á), to settle, agree.
aventura, *f.*, adventure.
aventurarse (á), to venture, dare, risk.
avergonzado, –a, ashamed, embarrassed, abashed.
avergonzar, to shame, make blush.
avergüenzan, *etc.*, *v.* **avergonzar.**
avería, *f.*, damage, loss.
averiguar, to verify, ascertain, find out, investigate, inquire.

avezado, -a, (á), accustomed, used.
avidez, *m.*, avidity, eagerness.
avino, *etc.*, *v.* **avenir.**
avisado, -a, skilful, expert, adroit, clever.
avisar, to give notice, announce, advise.
aviso, *m.*, notice, warning.
¡ay! oh! alas!
ay, *m.*, groan, moan, lament.
ayuda, *f.*, help, assistance, aid.
ayudar (á), to help, aid, assist.
azaroso, -a, hazardous, perilous, adventurous.
azorado, -a, terrified, abashed, confused.
azotar, to lash, whip, strike, beat down.
azote, *m.*, blow, whipping.
azul, *adj.* & *n.*, blue, azure; blueness.
azulado, -a, bluish.

B

babor, *m.*, port, larboard.
bacalao, *m.*, codfish.
¡bah! pshaw!
bahía, *f.*, bay, harbor.
bailar, to dance.
bailarina, *f.*, dancer, ballet girl.
bajar(se), to go down, descend; lower, reduce the price; — **la escalera,** to go downstairs; — **la cabeza,** to hang (one's head).
bajo, -a, *adj.*, low; *adv.*, under, underneath, below; **por lo —,** in an undertone, a whisper; **por — de,** below.
balancear, to balance, sway, rock.
balanza, *f.*, scale, balance.
balbucir, to stammer.
balde, *m.*, bucket, pail.
banco, *m.*, bench, seat.
banda, *f.*, border, edge, side.
bandada, *f.*, covey, flock.
bañar, to bathe.
barato, -a, cheap, inexpensive.
barba, *f.*, beard, chin.
barbarie, *f.*, barbarity, cruelty; brutality; rudeness.
barca, *f.*, bark, boat.
barco, *m.*, ship, vessel.
barlovento, *m.*, weather side, windward.
barquichuelo, *m.*, little boat.
barra, *f.*, bar, sand bank.
barranco, *m.*, ravine, glen, gully, gulch.
barrer, to sweep.
barril, *m.*, barrel, keg.
bastante, *adj.*, enough, sufficient, *pl.*, a number, a good many; *adv.*, enough, sufficiently, rather; quite, "pretty," a good deal; **lo —,** enough.
bastar, to suffice, be ample, be enough.
batahola, *f.*, uproar, clamor.
batallar, to fight, struggle, battle.
batir, to beat, dash, strike, pound; **—se,** to struggle.
beatíficamente, blissfully.
beber, to drink, swallow, drain.
bebida, *f.*, drink; drunkenness.
becerro, *m.*, calf, calf-skin.
belleza, *f.*, beauty, fairness.
bello, -a, beautiful, handsome.
bendecir, to bless.
bendito, -a, *p.p.* **bendecir,** blessed, holy.
bendición, *f.*, benediction, blessing.
beneficio, *f.*, kindness, favor.
benevolencia, *f.*, kindness, goodwill, charity.
benévolo, -a, kindly, gentle, friendly.
benigno, -a, kind, mild, merciful.
Bernardo, *m.*, Bernard.
besar, to kiss.

beso, *m.*, kiss.
bestia, *f.*, beast, brute.
besugo, *m.*, sea-bream, red gilt-head.
bien, *m.*, good, welfare; *pl.*, goods, property, riches; prosperity.
bien, *adv.*, well, right; very, quite, rather; surely; readily, heartily; all right; very well; **ó —**, **más —**, or, rather; **si —**, although.
bienestar, *m.*, comfort, well-being, prosperity.
bigote, *m.*, moustache, whisker.
bilioso, -a, bilious.
bisabuelo, *m.*, great-grandfather.
blanco, -a, white, fair.
blancura, *f.*, whiteness, fairness.
blanquear, to shine white.
bobalicón, -a, foolish, silly, stupid.
bobo, -a, *m. & f.*, fool, simpleton, dunce.
boca, *f.*, mouth; entrance; **— arriba**, mouth up (on one's back).
bocina, *f.*, speaking-trumpet.
boda, *f.*, wedding, marriage; match.
bodega, *f.*, cellar, warehouse.
bofetada, *f.*, box, slap, blow.
bogar, to row.
boína, *f.*, cap.
boletín, *m.*, bulletin, list.
bolos, *m.*, nine-pins, bowls.
bolsillo, *m.*, pocket, purse.
bondadoso, -a, kind, kindly, generous.
borde, *m.*, border, edge; shore (of sea).
bordo, *m.*, board; **á —**, on (ship-) board, aboard.
borla, *f.*, tassel.
borrachín, *m.*, drunkard, tippler.
borracho, -a, drunk, tipsy.
borracho, *m.*, drunkard, wine-bibber.
borrarse, to fade away, grow dim, disappear.
borrasca, *f.*, squall, tempest, storm.
borrico, *m.*, ass, fool.
botar, to launch; **— al agua**, to launch; **— á tierra**, to haul ashore, draw up (on land).
bote, *m.*, boat; can.
botín, *m.*, booty, spoils.
botón, *m.*, button.
bracero, *m.*, day-laborer.
brasa, *f.*, live coal.
bravamente, bravely.
bravo, -a, brave.
braza, *f.*, fathom.
brazo, *m.*, arm.
brea, *f.*, pitch, tar; **dar —**, to pay, cover ship's bottom w. pitch, resin, *etc.*
brecha, *f.*, breach, gap, aperture.
brega, *f.*, strife, struggle, quarrel.
breve, short, brief, limited.
bribón, -a, *m. & f.*, wretch, scoundrel.
brillar, to shine, glitter, gleam, sparkle.
brincar, to caper, frisk, leap, gambol.
brindar, to pledge, toast, drink health of.
brío, *m.*, strength, vigor, force; resolution.
brisa, *f.*, breeze.
broma, *f.*, joke, jest; merriment, hilarity.
bronce, *m.*, bronze, brass.
brotar, to bud, arise, break forth, come up.
bruces, de —, mouth down, face downward, face forward.
bruja, *f.*, witch.
brujería, *f.*, witchcraft, enchantment, superstition.
bruñido, -a, burnished, polished.
buenaventura, *f.*, fortune.
buen(o), -a, good, kind, loving, virtuous; well; favorable; **¡—!**, all right.

bulto, *m.*, bulk, mass, package; figure, outline, shape.
bullir, to move about, stir, swarm; **—le á uno el deseo,** to be very desirous, intensely eager.
burdo, -a, coarse, rough, common.
buril, *m.*, burin, graver.
burla, *f.*, mockery, ridicule, fun, banter.
burlar, to frustrate, outwit, baffle; **—se (de),** to make fun of, ridicule, mock.
burro, *m.*, donkey, ass.
busca, *f.*, search, pursuit.
buscar, to seek, search, look for, seek out.

C

cabal, just, exact, full.
caballería, *f.*, riding-beast, mount.
caballero, *m.*, gentleman, nobleman.
caballo, *m.*, horse.
cabecera, *f.*, head of a bed.
cabello, -s, *m.*, hair.
cabeza, *f.*, head, mind.
cabildo, *m.*, (cathedral-)chapter.
cabizbajo, -a, crestfallen, dispirited, dejected.
cabo, *m.*, end, extremity; cape, headland; cord, rope, cable; master, chief; **al — de,** at the end of; **al —,** at last, in the end, finally, at length.
cabriola, *f.*, caper, leap, gambol.
cadena, *f.*, chain.
caer, to fall, fall down, tumble, drop; *of wind*, to rise, come up; **—se,** to fall down; **— de bruces,** to fall headlong; **— sobre,** to befall.
caída, *f.*, fall, close; **— de la tarde,** nightfall, evening.
caja, *f.*, box, chest.
calafate, *m.*, caulker.
calamar, *m.*, squid; **salir al —,** to go out — fishing.
calamidad, *f.*, misfortune, misery, calamity.
calcular, to calculate, reckon, estimate.
cálculo, *m.*, calculation, conjecture.
calidad, *f.*, quality, character.
calificado, -a, competent, able, brilliant.
calma, *f.*, calm, stillness, hush, quiet, peace.
calmar, to calm, hush, pacify, soothe; soften, mitigate, alleviate.
calor, *m.*, heat, warmth.
calumniar, to blame; slander.
caluroso, -a, warm, hot, oppressive; enthusiastic, excited.
calzada, *f.*, way, road, path.
calzón, -es, *m.*, trousers, breeches.
calzonazos, *m.*, dotard; nonentity.
callado, -a, discreet, sensible; silent, thoughtful, reserved.
callarse, to be silent, hold one's tongue.
calle, *f.*, street, walk, road; **por la — abajo,** down the street; **por la — arriba,** up the street.
cama, *f.*, bed.
cámara, *f.*, ship's cabin.
camarín, *m.*, shrine.
cambiar (de), to change, exchange.
cambio, *m.*, change, exchange; recompense; **en —,** on the other hand.
caminante, *m.*, traveller.
caminar, to walk, go *or* move along, march, travel.
camino, *m.*, road, way, path; **— real,** high-way; **á medio —,** half-way.

camisa, *f.*, shirt.
campana, *f.*, bell.
campaña, *f.*, campaign.
campesino, *m.*, countryman, peasant, farmer.
campiña, *f.*, plain, field, level tract of land.
campo, *m.*, field.
candelabro, *m.*, candlestick, chandelier.
candente, glowing, red-hot.
cándido, candid, simple, artless, ingenuous.
candil, *m.*, oil-lamp.
candoroso, -a, candid, ingenuous; sincere.
cangrejo, *m.*, crab.
cansado, -a, tired, worn, weary, spent, exhausted.
cansancio, *m.*, weariness, fatigue.
cansarse (de), to tire of, grow weary.
cantaleta, *f.*, joking, chaffing, [fun.
cantar, to sing.
cantidad, *f.*, quantity, amount, sum of money.
caña, *f.*, handle; helm, tiller; pole, rod.
capa, *f.*, cloak, mantle, cover; layer; canopy.
capaz, capable.
capilla, *f.*, chapel.
capitán, *m.*, captain.
caprichoso, -a, capricious, whimsical, odd, fantastic.
carabina, *f.*, carbine; **tiro de —,** gun-shot.
caracol, *m.*, sea-shell.
carácter, *m.*, character, nature, disposition.
característico, -a, characteristic, peculiar.
caracterizar, to characterize, distinguish.
carcajada, *f.*, loud, hearty laugh.
cárcel, *f.*, jail, prison.
carcomido, -a, wormeaten, decayed.
carecer (de), to lack, need, want
carel, *m.*, wales, bends (of boat).
carena, *f.*, careening, repairing.
carenar, to careen.
carga, *f.*, load; charge, attack, onset.
cargar, to load.
caricia, *f.*, caress, endearment.
caridad, *f.*, charity, kindness.
cariño, *m.*, love, affection.
cariñosamente, kindly, lovingly fondly.
cariz, *m.*, aspect, appearance (of weather).
carne, *f.*, meat, flesh; life.
caroca, *f.*, caress.
carrera, *f.*, course, route; career, profession.
carretera, *f.*, wagon-road.
carro, *m.*, cart.
carta, *f.*, playing-card.
casa, *f.*, house, home, family; **á —,** home; **en —,** at home; **en — de,** at the house of; **— solariega,** manor-house; **para —,** home; **por —,** around home, about the house.
casado, -a, married.
casamiento, *m.*, marriage, wedding.
casarse (con), to marry, wed.
cascado, -a, broken, feeble.
casco, *m.*, hull (of a ship); helmet.
caserío, *m.*, group of houses, settlement, village.
caserón, *m.*, mansion, manor.
casi, almost, nearly.
Casimiro, *m.*, Casimir.
caso, *m.*, case, matter, event, occasion, need; **ir al —,** come to the point; **— raro!** wonder of wonders!
casorio, *m.*, marriage, wedding.
castigar, to punish, chastise.
castigo, *m.*, punishment, chastisement, correction, affliction.
casualidad, *f.*, chance, accident.

casualmente, accidentally.
casucha, *f.*, cottage, hut, hovel.
catálogo, *m.*, catalogue, list, table.
catecismo, *m.*, catechism.
catedral, *f. & adj.*, cathedral.
catorce, fourteen.
causa, *f.*, cause, reason, motive, occasion; **á — de**, because of, owing to.
causante, *m.*, causer, occasioner, "to blame for."
causar, to cause, produce, create, occasion, bring about.
cautela, *f.*, precaution, care.
cautelosamente, guardedly, cautiously, warily.
cavernoso, **-a**, hollow, deep.
cavilación, *f.*, worry, brooding.
caviloso, **-a**, captious, testy, faultfinding.
cayendo, *etc.*, *v.* **caer**.
caza, *f.*, hunting, chase; **á — de**, out hunting; **salir de —**, to go out hunting.
cazador, *m.*, hunter, sportsman.
cazurramente, slyly.
cebar, to feed; vent.
cebo, *m.*, bait.
cebolla, *f.*, onion.
ceder, to comply, give way, yield; grant, make over.
cegar, to blind, bewilder, confuse.
ceja, *f.*, eyebrow.
célebre, celebrated, famous.
celebrar, to celebrate, applaud, praise; to conduct (a service).
celeridad, *f.*, speed, swiftness, intensity.
cementerio, *m.*, cemetery.
cenar, to take supper.
cendal, gauze, scarf; haze.
ceniciento, **-a**, ashen.
ceniza, *f.*, ashes; (ashen) haze *or* mist.
censor, *m.*, critic.
centellante, **centelleante**, scintillating, sparkling, gleaming, flashing.
centellar, **centellear**, to flash, gleam, sparkle.
centenar, *m.*, hundred.
ceñir, to gird, encircle; hug.
centro, *m.*, center, middle.
cerca, *f.*, fence, enclosure, hedge.
cerca, near, close by, at hand, not far off; **— de**, about, close to, nearly; **de —** from near by, very close.
cercano, **-a**, near, close by, neighboring, adjoining.
cerciorar, to assure, affirm; **—se (de)**, to make sure, ascertain, assure oneself.
cerdo, *m.*, hog, pig.
cerebro, *m.*, brain, mind.
ceremonioso, **-a**, ceremonious, polite, formal.
cerilla, *f.*, wax taper; match.
cernerse, to soar, hover.
cero, zero.
cerrado, **-a**, closed; thick, close, abundant, heavy.
cerrar, to close, shut, fasten, obstruct, block up; to fall (the night).
certeza, *f.*, certitude, certainty.
certidumbre, *f.*, *id.*
certificar, to certify, attest.
cesar (de), to stop, cease, interrupt; **sin —**, ceaselessly, endlessly.
césped, *m.*, turf, sod, grass.
cestillo, *m.*, little basket.
cesto, **-a**, *m. & f.*, basket, hamper.
cicatería, *f.*, meanness, trick.
cielo, *m.*, sky, heavens, firmament.
ciencia, *f.*, science, knowledge; **—s exactas**, exact sciences; mathematics; **á — cierta**, positively, with certainty.
cien(to), *m.*, one hundred.
cierran, *etc.*, *v.* **cerrar**.

ciertamente, certainly, surely.
cierto, -a, certain, sure, evident, positive; **por —**, indeed, certainly. [ish.
cifrar, to calculate, place; cher-
cigarro, *m.*, cigar.
cima, *f.*, summit, top, crest, peak, height.
cinco, five.
cincuenta, fifty.
cinta, *f.*, ribbon, tape, band.
cintura, *f.*, waist.
ciñe, *etc.*, *v.* **ceñir**.
Cipriano, *m.*, Cyprian.
circunstancia, *f.*, circumstance; position, condition, state (*pl. w. sing. meaning*).
circunstantes, *m.pl.*, bystanders, onlookers, spectators.
cirio, *m.*, taper, wax-candle.
cirujano, *m.*, surgeon, doctor.
cita, *f.*, appointment, engagement, rendez-vous; **— amorosa**, lovers' tryst.
citado, -a, aforesaid.
ciudad, *f.*, city, town.
claramente, clearly, obviously, openly.
claridad, *f.*, light, brightness, clearness.
claro, -a, clear, bright, light; ¡—!, of course, certainly.
clásico, -a, classic.
Claudio, *m.*, Claude, Claudius.
clavar, to nail, drive in, fasten; fix, root, rivet; **— una mirada** (*pers. indir. obj.*), fix a glance or look upon; **clavado al pecho**, in a close embrace.
claveteado, -a, hob-nailed.
clero, *m.*, clergy.
cobrar, to recover, regain.
cocina, *f.*, kitchen.
cocinero, *m.*, cook.
cochino, -a, nasty, dirty, filthy, beastly.
cochino, *m.*, pig; a dirty, mean person.

codazo, *m.*, nudge.
codiciado, -a, coveted, desired, sought after.
codicioso, -a, covetous, avaricious, grasping, greedy.
coger, to grasp, hold, seize, catch; pick up, collect, gather.
cohonestar, to justify, vindicate, exonerate, clear, defend.
cojo, -a, cripple, lame.
colegio, *m.*, college, school.
colegir, to gather, infer, deduce.
cólera, *f.*, anger, rage, passion.
colérico, -a, provoked, angry, wrathful.
colgar, to hang, suspend.
colocar, to place, set, lay, locate.
colorado, -a, red; **ponerse —**, to blush.
columbrar, to discern, perceive, espy.
comadre, *f.*, gossip, (godmother).
comarca, *f.*, neighborhood, region, district.
comarcano, -a, near, neighboring.
combinar, to combine, join.
comedia, *f.*, comedy, play, show.
comendador, *m.*, knight commander.
comentar, to comment, criticise, judge.
comentario, *m.*, comment, remark, observation.
comenzar (**á**), to commence, begin.
comer, to eat. [er.
comerciante, *m.*, merchant, trad-
comerciar, to trade, traffic.
comercio, *m.*, commerce, trade, business.
cometer, to commit.
cómico, -a, comical, ludicrous, funny.
cómico, *m.*, comedian, actor.
comiencen, *etc.*, *v.* **comenzar**.
comienzo, *m.*, beginning, commencement.

comisión, *f.*, commission, order, charge.
como, as, how, like, since, inasmuch as; **¿cómo?** how? in what manner *or* way? **¡cómo!** what! why! **¿á — ?** (at) how much? — **que,** as; — **si,** as if.
compacto, -a, solid, dense, close.
compadecer, to pity, sympathize with.
compaña, *f.*, company, crew.
compañero, -a, *m.* & *f.*, companion, comrade, friend, fellow, chum; seaman.
compañía, *f.*, company, fellowship.
comparación, *f.*, comparison.
compartir, to share, divide equally.
compasión, *f.*, pity, sympathy.
compasivo, -a, compassionate, tender, pitying.
complacer, to please, humor.
completamente, entirely.
completar, to complete, finish, make up.
completo, -a, complete, full; **por —,** entirely.
complicado, -a, complicated, intricate, involved.
componer, to compose, mend, repair.
compra, *f.*, purchase.
comprar (*pers. indir. obj.*), to buy.
comprender, to understand, comprehend, know; comprise, embrace, include, contain.
comprometer, to compromise, expose, endanger.
común, common, ordinary, usual, customary, frequent; **por lo —,** commonly, usually, as a rule.
común, *m.*, average, majority, greater number.
comúnmente, commonly, ordinarily, generally.
comunicar, to communicate, impart; make known, inform.
con, with, by, in, toward, against, about; on account of, because of; — **que,** so; — **tal que,** provided that.
concavidad, *f.*, concavity, hollow, hole, cavity.
concebir, to conceive.
conceder, to concede, bestow, grant, admit.
concentrado, -a, concentrated.
concepto, *m.*, idea, conception, opinion.
concertado, -a, harmonious, regular, correct.
concertar, to arrange, agree.
concesión, *f.*, concession, consent.
concibió, *etc.*, *v.* **concebir.**
conciliábulo, *m.*, assembly, (unlawful) gathering.
conciliar, to reconcile, win over, induce.
concluir (de), to end, finish, close, complete; **—se,** to come to an end, to run out of (bread, *etc.*).
concluya, *etc.*, *v.* **concluir.**
conde, *m.*, count.
condena, *f.*, sentence, condemnation, penalty.
condenar (á), to condemn, sentence.
condescendencia, *f.*, condescension, complaisance, courtesy, affability.
condición, *f.*, state, condition, disposition, temper.
conducir, to conduct, guide, lead.
conducta, *f.*, behavior, deportment.
confesar, to confess, acknowledge, own, grant; hear confessions; shrive.
confianza, *f.*, confidence, trust, faith; courage.
confiar, to trust in, confide.

confidencia, *f.*, confidence, secret.
confiese, *etc.*, *v.* **confesar.**
confín, *m.*, confine, boundary, limit, border.
confirmar, to confirm, verify, corroborate.
confite, *m.*, candy, comfit, sugar-plum.
confitería, *f.*, confectioner's (shop).
confundirse, to mix, mingle.
confuso, -a, confused, mixed; blurred, indistinct, obscure.
congoja, *f.*, anguish, agony, torture.
congregar, to assemble, gather, meet.
congrio, *m.*, conger eel.
conmigo, with me, with *or* to myself.
conmoción, *f.*, commotion, excitement, tumult.
conmovedor, -a, moving, touching, pathetic, heart-rending.
conmover, to move, disturb, affect.
conocer, to know, recognize.
conocimiento, *m.*, knowledge, understanding, consciousness.
conozco, *etc.*, *v.* **conocer.**
conque, so, well then, now, in short, finally.
conquista, *f.*, conquest.
consagrar, to consecrate, devote.
consecuencia, *f.*, consequence, effect.
conseguir, to obtain, get, gain, succeed in getting *or* doing, bring about.
consejera, *f.*, counsellor.
consejo, *m.*, advice, counsel, recommendation, admonition; opinion, decision.
consentir (en), to consent, agree, acquiesce; permit, allow.
conservación, *f.*, self-preservation.
conservar, to keep, hold.
consideración, *f.*, consideration, regard, esteem, respect.
considerar, to consider, regard, think over; esteem, respect.
consigo, with himself, herself, yourself, itself, oneself, themselves, yourselves.
consigue, *etc.*, *v.* **conseguir.**
consintiese, *etc.*, *v.* **consentir.**
consistir, to consist, lie.
consolar, to comfort, soothe, cheer.
consonancia, *f.*, harmony, accord, conformity.
consorte, *m.*, consort, spouse.
constancia, *f.*, constancy, steadiness, persistence.
constante, constant, never-ending.
constar, to be clear, plain, evident.
consternado, -a, alarmed, terrified, panic-stricken, in consternation.
constipado, *m.*, cold.
constituir, to constitute, make, produce.
constituyen, *etc.*, *v.* **constituir.**
construir, to construct, build.
construye, *etc.*, *v.* **construir.**
consuelo, *m.*, consolation, comfort.
consultar, to consult, ask advice.
consumado, -a, consummate, accomplished, perfect.
contar, to count; relate, tell; — . . . **años,** to be . . . years old.
contemplar, to contemplate, look at, gaze at, examine, study.
contener, to contain, hold, enclose; restrain, repress, control, check; **—se,** to restrain oneself.
contentar, to content, please, gratify.
contento, -a, contented, satisfied, happy.
contestación, *f.*, reply, answer.

contestar (á), to answer, respond, reply.
contienda, *f.*, quarrel, dispute, fray, fight.
contigo, with thee, you.
contiguo, -a, touching, adjoining, close, near by.
continuado, -a, continued, constant, prolonged, steady, uninterrupted.
continuamente, constantly, endlessly, steadily.
continuar, to continue, pursue, proceed, go on.
contorno, *m.*, vicinity, environs.
contra, against, across, counter, contrary *or* in opposition to.
contraer, to contract; — **matrimonio,** to marry.
contrahecho, -a, bent, deformed.
contraído, -a, contracted, tightened, diminished, shrunk.
contrajeron, *etc.*, *v.* **contraer.**
contrapeso, *m.*, counterpoise, counterbalance.
contrario, -a, contrary, opposed, antagonistic.
contrarrestar, to check, counteract, neutralize.
contrastar, to contrast.
contratiempo, *m.*, accident, mishap, misfortune, calamity, disaster.
convaleciente, convalescent.
convecino, -a, *m.* & *f.*, neighbor, companion, associate.
convencer, to convince, assure.
convencional, conventional.
convenga, *etc.*, *v.* **convenir.**
convenido, -a, agreed, settled.
convenir (á), to agree; (*pers. indir. obj.*) to suit, be suitable *or* compatible; **—se,** to be agreed.
conversación, *f.*, conversation, talk; company.
convertir, to convert, change, transform; **—se,** to change.
convidar (á), to invite, treat.
convino, *etc.*, *v.* **convenir.**
convirtió, *etc.*, *v.* **convertir**
convite, *m.*, invitation.
convocar, to convene, summon, call together.
convulso, -a, convulsed, shaken.
conyugal, conjugal.
copa, *f.*, glass.
copiosamente, copiously, abundantly.
copla, *f.*, stanza, ballad, popular song.
copo, *m.*, bundle, flake.
coraje, *m.*, rage, passion.
corazón, *m.*, heart; **de (todo) —,** truly, sincerely, heartily.
corcovado, -a, hump-backed; *n. m.*, hunchback.
cordel, *m.*, cord, rope.
cordialmente, cordially, heartily.
cordón, *m.*, cord, girdle.
cornisa, *f.*, cornice.
coronado, -a, crowned, surmounted.
coronar, to crown, crowd.
corporal, —, bodily, physical; **lo —,** the physical make-up, external appearance.
corrección, *f.*, correction, improvement; correctness.
corredor, *m.*, corridor.
correr (á), to run, flow; pass by, go through; travel; draw aside (curtain); be current; undergo; pursue; **echar á —,** to begin running.
correría, *f.*, excursion; *pl.*, travels.
correspondencia, *f.*, return, interchange.
corresponder, to correspond; belong to, be due to.
corrido, -a, abashed, ashamed.
corriente, current, ordinary, regular, common.
corrillo, *m.*, *dim.* **corro.**
corro, *m.*, group, circle.

cortar, to cut, separate.
cortejar, to court, woo.
cortina, *f.*, curtain.
corto, -a, short, scanty, little, brief.
cosa, *f.*, thing, object; matter; something; **otra —,** something else; **fué — hecha,** the matter was settled.
coscorrón, blow on the head, whack.
coser, to sew.
costa, *f.*, coast, shore, beach; cost, expense, charge.
costado, *m.*, rib, side (of a ship).
costanero, -a, on the coast; shore.
costar, to cost, cause, occasion.
costera, *f.*, (fishing-)season.
costumbre, *f.*, custom, habit; *pl.*, customs, manners; **de —,** usual.
cotidiano, -a, daily.
crecer, to grow, become larger, increase; swell, rise.
creer, to believe, credit; **¡ya lo creo!** I should say so! **creo que sí,** I believe so.
crepúsculo, *m.*, twilight, dusk.
criar, to nurse, rear.
criatura, *f.*, creature, child, baby.
criaturita, *f.*, little one, little child.
cristal, crystal, glass.
cristalino, -a, crystalline, clear, transparent, bright.
Cristo, *m.*, Christ.
crítico, -a, critical, decisive.
crueldad, *f.*, cruelty, inhumanity; harshness.
cruelmente, cruelly, mercilessly.
crugido, *m.*, scratching; rattling, cracking.
crugir, to crunch, crackle, creak, rustle.
cruzado, -a, clasped.
cruzar (por), to cross, dart; to pass.
cuaderno, *m.*, memorandum-book, note-book.
cuadra, *f.*, stable; large hall.
cuadrilla, *f.*, band, troop, gang.
cuadro, *m.*, square; picture, scene; bed, plot (of vegetables).
cual, -es; el, la —; los, las —es, who, which; such as, like, same; **cada —,** each one; **lo —,** which; **— si,** as if.
cualidad, *f.*, quality, characteristic.
cuando, when, whenever; **para —,** when; **de vez en —,** *v. p. 8, n. 10.*
cuantioso, -a, ample, rich.
cuanto, -a, -os, -as, how much, how many; as much as, as many as; the more (*when correlative of* **tanto**); all, all that, whatever, a few; **en —,** as soon as; **en — á,** in regard to, as to; **— más (mejor),** the more (the better); **— + poder,** as much as possible; **otras cuantas,** several others; **unos —os,** several.
cuarenta, forty.
cuartillo, *m.*, fourth of a real.
cuarto, *m.*, room; *v. p. 15, n. 4;* quarter of an hour; *pl.*, money, cash.
cuatro, four.
cubierto, -a, *p.p.* **cubrir.**
cubrir, to cover, spread over.
cuclillas, en —, crouching.
cuchara, *f.*, spoon.
cuchicheo, *m.*, whispering.
cuchillo, *m.*, knife.
cuelga, *etc.*, *v.* **colgar.**
cuenta, *f.*, account, calculation, reckoning; **á —,** on account, in part payment; **dar — (de),** to tell (about), relate; answer (for), give account, know (of); account (for); *v. p. 62, n. 2;* **hacer —,** settle an account.
cuentan, *etc.*, *v.* **contar.**

cuerda, *f.*, cord, rope, line.
cuerdo, -a, prudent, sensible, judicious, discreet.
cuerno, *m.*, horn.
cuero, *m.*, leather.
cuerpecillo, *m.*, little, diminutive body.
cuerpo, *m.*, body; **medio del —,** waist.
cuestión, *f.*, question; quarrel; dispute.
cueva, *f.*, cave.
cuidado, *m.*, care, solicitude; apprehension, fear; **¡—!** take care! **en —,** on guard.
cuidadosamente, carefully.
cuidar (de), to take care, be careful.
culpa, *f.*, fault, blame, guilt.
cumplidamente, completely, entirely, fully, to the utmost.
cumplido, full, complete, ample; **bien —,** fully, quite.
cumplimiento, *m.*, fulfilment; accomplishment.
cumplir, to fulfil, complete, accomplish; perform, carry out; keep a promise.
cuna, *f.*, cradle, family, lineage.
cundir, to spread.
cuñado, *m.*, brother-in-law.
cura, *m.*, priest.
curiosidad, *f.*, curiosity.
curioso, -a, *m. & f.*, meddler, (curious) onlooker.

CH

chanza, *f.*, fun, joke, jest.
chaqueta, *f.*, jacket, coat.
charla, *f.*, chatter, light talk.
charlar, to chat, talk, gossip.
chasco, *m.*, trick, practical joke; **dar un —,** to play a joke on.
chico, -a, *m. & f.*, youngster; little lad, chap; little girl, lass.
chicuelo, *m.*, urchin, youngster.
chicharro, *m.*, small tunny.
chillido, *m.*, scream, shriek.
chimenea, *f.*, chimney, hearth.
chiquillo, *m.*, youngster, child.
chispa, *f.*, spark.
chisporrotear, to sputter.
chisporroteo, *m.*, hissing, crackling, sputtering.
chiste, *m.*, joke, witty saying.
chistoso, -a, funny, witty, droll.
chocar, to hit, strike, jostle.
choque, *m.*, shock, collision.
chorrear, to drip, stream.
choza, *f.*, hut.
chubasco, *m.*, squall, shower.
chupar, to suck.
chupón, *m.*, sucker.

D

D., Don.
Da., Doña.
dama, *f.*, dame, lady.
danza, *f.*, dance.
dañar, to impair, weaken, lessen, diminish.
daño, *m.*, harm, damage, loss.
dar, to give, present, hand; inspire, cause, excite; attribute; strike (the hour); **— á,** to overlook, open into *or* (out) on; **— á entender,** to manifest; **—se á,** to give oneself up wholly, devote oneself, begin; **— con,** *v. p. 2, n. 5;* **— comienzo,** to begin; **— cuenta,** *v.* **cuenta** *& p. 62, n. 2;* **— un chasco,** *v.* **chasco;** **— parte (de),** *v. p. 72, n. 2;* **— un paso,** to take a step; **—se por entendido, -a,** *v. p. 17, n. 2;* **—se prisa (á),** to hasten, hurry; **— la vuelta,** *v. p. 11, n. 1;* **— vueltas á,** *v. p. 30, n. 6.*
dato, *m.*, fact, piece of information.
de, *conj.*, than, as; **— lo que,** than.

de, *prep.*, of, about, from (over), belonging to; by, for; in, on, upon; on account of, with.
dé, *etc.*, *v.* **dar.**
debajo (de), under, underneath, below.
deber, *m.*, duty, obligation.
deber, to owe; must, ought, have to; — **de,** *v. p. 3, n. 2.*
debido, -a (á), owing to.
débil, weak, feeble.
decencia, *f.*, decency, cleanliness, tidiness.
decente, decent, respectable.
decidido, -a, determined, positive.
decidir, to decide, conclude, resolve, determine, —**se,** to decide.
decir, to say, tell, speak, affirm, assert, state; **al — de,** according to, in the opinion of; **por mejor —,** rather.
decisión, *f.*, firmness, resolution, determination.
declaración, *f.*, declaration, avowal.
declarado, -a, declared, sworn.
declarar, to declare, manifest.
declinar, to decline, sink, descend.
decretar, to decree, order.
dedicar, to dedicate, devote; —**se,** to give oneself up to.
dedo, *m.*, finger.
defecto, *m.*, fault, defect, imperfection, failing.
defender, to guard, defend, protect.
defensa, *f.*, defense, safeguard, protection.
definitivamente, finally, definitely.
defraudado, -a, defrauded, outwitted, cheated, tricked.
degenerar, to degenerate.
dejar, to let, allow, permit; leave, leave off, let go, cease, relinquish, abandon, quit; give, entrust, deliver; —**se,** to permit *or* allow oneself to; *v. p. 30, n. 2; p. 52, n. 3.*
delantal, *m.*, apron.
delante, before, in front (of), ahead (of), in the presence of; **por —,** in front.
deleitable, delightful, delectable.
deleite, pleasure, relish, satisfaction.
deliberar, to deliberate, consider, consult.
delicadamente, delicately, carefully, deftly.
delicadeza, *f.*, delicacy, refinement, good breeding.
delicado, -a, delicate.
delicia, *f.*, delight, satisfaction, pleasure.
delito, *m.*, crime, guilt, transgression.
demanda, *f.*, demand, request.
demandar, to demand, ask, petition; claim.
demás, *adj.*, **el, la, lo, los, las —,** the remainder, the rest, the balance, the others; *adv.*, besides, over, moreover.
demasiado, -a, *adj.*, excessive, too much, more than enough; *adv.*, too, too much; more than enough; too well.
demonio, *m.*, devil.
demostrar, to show, manifest, evince.
demudado, -a, altered, agitated, excited.
denominado, -a, named, called.
dentro, within, in, inside; — **de,** within, inside of.
denuesto, *m.*, insult, affront, injury.
departir, to talk, chat.
depositar, to deposit, place, sequester.
depósito, *m.*, sequestration.
deprimido, -a, dejected, meek.

derechamente, directly, straight, right.
derecho, -a, right, straight, direct; **-a,** right (hand).
derecho, *m.*, privilege, right.
derramar, to shed; **—se,** to overflow, spread, fill; **— por el cuerpo á,** to take possession of.
derribar, to tear down, demolish.
derrotar, to defeat, rout, vanquish.
derruido, -a, ruinous, dilapidated.
desabrimiento, *m.*, disagreement, misunderstanding, asperity.
desagradable, unpleasant, disagreeable.
desagraviar, to conciliate, make amends, give satisfaction.
desahogado, -a, free, clear, unencumbered.
desahogar, to relieve, ease, clear (one's head); **—se,** to unbosom, unburden oneself, express oneself fully.
desaire, *m.*, rebuff, slight.
desalado, -a, eager, breathless, anxious, in haste.
desaliento, *m.*, dismay, discouragement, depression, alarm.
desamarrar, to untie, detach, unfasten, let go.
desaparecer, to vanish, disappear.
desarrollado, -a, well developed.
desasosiego, *m.*, uneasiness, restlessness.
desatar, to untie, loosen, undo; **—se,** to break forth *or* loose.
desazón, *m.*, uneasiness, restlessness, dissatisfaction, disappointment.
desbaratado, -a, ruined, destroyed, in pieces.
desbocado, -a, foul-mouthed, coarse, indecent.
desbocarse, to use abusive *or* insulting language.
descalzo, -a, barefooted.
descansado, -a, restful, easy.
descansar, to rest.
descanso, *m.*, repose, rest, peace; landing, resting-place.
descargar, to discharge, unload.
descascado, -a, broken down.
descender, to descend, go *or* walk down, let (oneself) down, lower oneself.
descolorido, -a, pale, white.
descomponerse, to become altered *or* deranged, change for worse.
descomunal, extraordinary, uncommon, unusual.
desconcertar, to disconcert, confuse, ruffle, disturb.
desconfianza, *f.*, distrust, fear.
desconfiar, to doubt, mistrust.
desconocido, -a, unknown, unexplored.
desconsolado, -a, disconsolate, downhearted, heart-sick.
desconsuelo, *m.*, grief, despair.
descontento, -a, displeased, dissatisfied, uneasy.
descosido, -a, torn, ripped.
descubierto, -a, *p.p.* **descubrir;** bare, open, disclosed, uncovered; **poner al —,** to uncover, expose.
descubrimiento, *m.*, discovery, disclosure.
descubrir, to discover, ascertain, find out; disclose, uncover, reveal, expose to view.
descuidado, -a, careless, listless, indifferent.
descuido, *m.*, carelessness, oversight, negligence.
desde, from, since; **— que,** *conj.*, since.
desdén, *m.*, disdain, scorn, contempt.
desdeñoso, disdainful, scornful.
desdicha, *f.*, misfortune, misery, wretchedness.

desdichado, -a, unlucky, unfortunate.
desdoblar, to unfold.
desear, to desire, wish, long for.
desembocar, to empty, flow into, pour out.
desempeñar, to perform, carry out, discharge, accomplish.
desengaño, *m.*, disillusion, disappointment.
desenvolver, to unwrap, unfold, develop; — **con,** to display, exhibit, parade (for person's benefit).
deseo, *m.*, desire, wish, longing.
deseoso, -a, eager, desirous, longing.
deserción, *f.*, desertion, escape, loss.
desesperación, *f.*, despair, desperation.
desfallecer, to faint, swoon.
desfigurado, -a, disfigured; tanned, roughened.
desgarrador, -a, heart-rending, piercing.
desgarrar, to tear, rend.
desgracia, *f.*, misfortune, calamity, adversity; grief, sorrow, affliction; **por** —, unfortunately.
desgraciadamente, unluckily.
desgraciado, -a, wretched; unhappy, miserable.
desgreñado, -a, dishevelled; in disorder.
deshabitado, -a, uninhabited, abandoned, empty, deserted.
deshabitar, to leave, desert, quit.
deshacer, to undo, efface, destroy; counteract; **—se,** *v. p. 52, n. 5*, to break forth, give vehement expression to; **—se de,** to sell, transfer, get rid of.
deshecho, -a, *p. p.* **deshacer,** destroyed, in pieces.
deshizo, *etc. v.* **deshacer.**
deshonrado, -a, dishonored, disgraced.
designar, to appoint, name.
desigual, unequal, uneven; changeable, variable.
deslenguado, -a, talkative, loquacious; free of speech, gossiping, slanderous.
deslizar, to slip, glide.
desmayado, -a, fainting; pale; faint.
desmerecer, to be unworthy, undeserving.
desmesuradamente, excessively; widely; wildly.
desnudo, -a, naked, bare, uncovered.
desobedecer, to disobey.
despacio, slowly, deliberately; ¡—! gently.
despacito, very quietly, slowly.
despachar, to despatch, get through; send; **—se,** to make haste, finish quickly, get through with despatch.
desparramado, -a, scattered, dispersed.
despavorido, -a, aghast, terrified.
despecho, *m.*, spite; **á** —, despite, notwithstanding.
despedir, to give forth, emit, throw off; **—se (de),** to take leave, say good-bye.
despegar, to detach, separate, withdraw; unfold; — **los labios,** to speak.
despejado, -a, clear, free, unobstructed; cloudless, serene.
despertar, to awake.
despide, *etc.*, *v.* **despedir.**
despierto, -a, wide-awake, bright, lively, clever; sharp, keen; **tener** — **el apetito,** to be very hungry.
despoblar, to depopulate, desert; **—se,** to become deserted.
despojar, to despoil, deprive. cut out *or* off.
despojo, *m.*, spoliation, robbery, plunder.

desposeído, -a, deprived, dispossessed.
despótico, -a, arbitrary, tyrannical.
despreciar, to despise, reject.
despreciativo, -a, depreciative, scornful, disparaging.
desprecio, *m.*, contempt, scorn, disdain.
desprenderse (de), to give up, dispossess oneself.
despreocupado, -a, unprejudiced, broad-minded, liberal.
después, *adv.*, after, afterward, next, later, then; **— de,** *prep.*, after; **— que,** *conj.*, after.
destacar, to detach.
destello, *m.*, sparkle, flash.
destinado, -a, designed, destined.
destino, *m.*, destiny, fate.
destornillar, to unscrew.
destreza, *f.*, dexterity, skill, adroitness.
destruir, to destroy, efface, wear away.
desvelado, -a, awake.
desvergonzado, -a, impudent, shameless.
desvergüenza, *f.*, shamelessness, audacity, impudence.
desviar, to turn aside, divert; excuse.
detener, to detain, stop, hinder, check; **—se (á),** to tarry, stop, stand still.
determinación, *f.*, determination, resolution, decision.
determinar (de), to determine, conclude, decide; **—se (á),** to resolve firmly, make up one's mind.
detiene, *etc.*, *v.* **detener.**
detrás, *adv.*, behind, back (of), in the rear; after; **— de,** *prep.*, behind; **por — de,** behind.
detuvo, *etc.*, *v.* **detener.**
deuda, *f.*, debt.
devastador, -a, destructive, ruinous, pernicious.
devolver, to return, give *or* send back.
devoto, -a, devout, pious, faithful.
devuelto, *p.p.* **devolver.**
dí, *imp.* **decir.**
día, *m.*, day, daylight; **al entrar el —,** at daybreak; **de —,** by day; **el — menos pensado,** *p. 141, n. 1*; **en todo el —,** all day long; **las horas del —,** day-time; **medio —,** midday, noon; **por el —,** in the daytime, by day; **todos los —s,** every day; **un — y otro —,** day after day.
diablo, *m.*, devil, deuce.
diáfano, -a, clear, limpid, transparent, diaphanous.
dibujar, to delineate; **—se,** to appear, flit (a smile).
dice, *etc.*, *v.* **decir.**
diciembre, December.
dicterio, *m.*, sarcasm, taunt, insult.
dicha, *f.*, happiness, felicity, bliss.
dicho, -a, *p.p.* **decir; mejor —,** rather.
dichoso, -a, happy.
Diego, *m.*, James.
diente, *m.*, tooth.
dieran, *etc.*, *v.* **dar.**
diestro, -a, dexterous, expert, skilful.
diez, ten; **las —,** ten o'clock; **— y seis,** sixteen; **— y nueve,** nineteen.
diferencia, *f.*, difference.
diferente, different, unlike.
difícil, difficult, hard; unlikely, improbable.
dificultad, *f.*, difficulty, pain. labor.
difunto, -a, deceased, late.
difunto, -a, *m. & f.*, corpse.

diga, *etc.*, *v.* **decir.**
dignarse, to deign, condescend.
dignidad, *f.*, dignity, pride.
digno, -a, worthy, suitable, appropriate.
dijeron, *etc.*, *v.* **decir.**
dilatado, -a, large, wide, spacious, extensive, vast.
dilatar, to postpone, defer, delay.
diligente, diligent, active, ready, careful.
diminutivo, *m.*, diminutive.
diminuto, -a, diminutive, tiny.
dinero, *m.*, money, wealth, fortune.
Dios, *m.*, God; god; **— mediante,** God willing; **por —,** for God's sake.
diosa, *f.*, goddess.
diplomacia, *f.*, astuteness, diplomacy.
diplomático, *m.*, diplomat.
dirá, *etc.*, *v.* **decir.**
dirección, *f.*, direction, route; management, control, command; **en — á,** towards.
directamente, directly, openly.
directo, -a, straight, direct, open.
dirigir, to direct; **—se (á),** to address, turn to, go toward, to go.
disciplina, *f.*, discipline, punishment, chastisement, whipping.
discordia, *f.*, discord, dissension, disagreement, strife.
disculpa, *f.*, excuse, justification.
disculpar, to excuse; **—se,** to excuse, justify oneself; apologize.
discurrir, to roam, ramble.
discurso, *m.*, discourse, speech, talk.
disfrazar, to disguise, conceal.
disfrutar (de), to enjoy, take advantage of.
disgustar, to disgust, displease, vex; **—se,** to be displeased, put out, trouble oneself.
disgusto, *m.*, disgust, vexation, annoyance; grief, sorrow, disappointment.
disimuladamente, slyly, furtively.
disimular, to dissemble, hide, conceal, mask.
disimulo, *m.*, dissimulation; **con —,** covertly.
disiparse, to scatter, disperse.
disminuir, to diminish, lessen, decrease.
disminuya, *etc.*, *v.* **disminuir.**
dispensar, to grant, bestow, apply; **—se (á),** to use *or* assume towards . . .
disponer, to dispose, arrange, prepare, resolve; use; **—se,** to get ready.
disposición, *f.*, arrangement, aptitude, inclination, tendency; condition, temper; order, manner. measure.
dispuesto, -a, *p.p.* **disponer;** disposed, ready.
disputa, *f.*, dispute, argument.
disputar, to dispute, argue, contest, quarrel.
distancia, *f.*, distance.
distante, distant, far, remote; away.
diste, *etc.*, *v.* **dar.**
distinguir, to distinguish, discern.
distinto, -a, distinct, different; clear.
distracción, *f.*, carelessness, indifference, unconcern, coolness.
distraídamente, absent-mindedly.
distraído, -a, distracted, wandering, inattentive, heedless, preoccupied.
disuadir, to dissuade, deter.
diversamente, differently.

divertido,-a, entertaining, amusing, funny.
divertir, to divert, entertain; **—se,** to amuse oneself.
divisar, to perceive, detect, discern, discover.
doblar, to double, bow, bend, give way; to round; **—se,** to give way; **— la rodilla,** to kneel.
doce, twelve; **las —,** twelve o'clock; **las — de la noche,** midnight.
docena, *f.*, dozen.
dócil, docile, yielding.
dócilmente, quietly, meekly, mildly.
doctrina, *f.*, doctrine, belief, creed; principles.
documento, *m.*, document, paper.
dogo, *m.*, terrier.
dolor, *m.*, anguish, grief, sorrow, pain.
dolorido, -a, grieved, sorrowful, hurt, pained, aching.
dolorosamente, painfully, sorrowfully.
doloroso, -a, sorrowful, pitiful.
doméstico, -a, domestic.
dominar, to control, master.
domingo, *m.*, Sunday.
dominio, *m.*, power, possession; *pl.*, *id.*
don, *m.*, gift, present.
Don, *m.*, Mr. (*only before Christian name*).
doncella, *f.*, maiden, lass.
donde, where, in which place; **á —,** where, whither; **de —,** whence; **donde quiera (que),** wherever, anywhere; **por —,** where; **¿por dónde?,** where, whereabouts, by what road? which way?
Doña, Miss *or* Mrs. (*v.* **Don**).
dorado, -a, gilded, gilt.
dormido, -a, asleep, still.
dormir, to sleep, slumber, rest.
dormitar, to doze, nap.
Dorotea, *f.*, Dorothea, Dorothy.
dos, two; **las —,** two o'clock.
doscientos, -as, two hundred.
dote, *f.*, dowry; *pl.*, (natural) gifts, talents, blessings.
doy, *etc.*, *v.* **dar.**
driza, *f.*, halliard.
duda, *f.*, doubt; **sin —,** doubtless.
dudar (de), to doubt, discredit.
dueño, *m.*, master, owner, proprietor.
duermen, *etc.*, *v.* **dormir.**
dulce, sweet, gentle, kind, amiable.
dulcificar, to sweeten, soften, make more gentle.
dulzura, *f.*, sweetness, gentleness; pleasure.
duque, *m.*, duke.
duramente, forcibly, roughly, violently.
durante, during.
durar, to last, continue.
durmiendo, *etc.*, *v.* **dormir.**
duro, -a, hard, cruel, unjust; unbearable, vexatious.
duro, *m.*, dollar.

E

E., *v.* **este.**
é, and (*before* **i** *or* **hi**).
¡ea! come! come now!
eclipsar, to eclipse, outshine, surpass.
echar, to throw, toss, fling, cast, dart, pitch, hurl; drive, turn; apply, put; give forth; *of a season*, begin; **— á,** to begin, turn out; **— abajo,** to raze, demolish; **— espuma,** to froth; **— la culpa,** to blame; **— los dientes,** to eat; **— menos,** to miss; **— raíces,** to take root; **—se,** to lie down, throw

oneself down; **—se á,** to begin; **—se encima,** to fall upon.

edad, *f.*, age, epoch, time; **de corta —,** young; **de más —,** older; **— Media,** Middle Ages.

edificio, *m.*, building, structure.

educación, *f.*, education, training, instruction.

educado, -a, educated, brought up, bred.

efectivamente, certainly, indeed, in truth, in fact.

efecto, *m.*, effect, consequence; **en —,** indeed, in fact, actually.

efectuar, to effect, accomplish, carry out.

eficacia, *f.*, efficacy, potency.

efusión, *f.*, effusion.

egoísta, *m. & adj.*, egoist; selfish.

egregio, -a, distinguished, eminent, illustrious.

ejecutar, to execute, perform, act, do.

ejemplar, exemplary, model.

ejemplaridad, *f.*, example, warning.

ejemplo, *m.*, example.

ejercer, to exercise, practice.

ejército, *m.*, army.

elegir, to select, choose.

elemental, elementary.

elemento, *m.*, element.

elevado, -a, tall, erect.

elevar, to raise, elevate, lift; **—se,** to rise, ascend, soar.

eligen, *etc.*, *v.* **elegir.**

Elisa, *f.*, Eliza, Elizabeth.

Elisina, *dim.* **Elisa.**

Elisita, *id.*

elocuente, eloquent.

eludir, to elude, avoid, escape.

embarazar, to embarrass, hinder, perplex.

embarazoso, -a, embarrassing, uncomfortable. [sel.

embarcación, *f.*, boat, ship, ves-

embarcarse, to embark, go on board.

embargado, -a, seized, possessed; absorbed.

embargar, to seize, attach; absorb, engross, overwhelm; hold fast, lie heavily on.

embargo, *m.*, embargo, seizure; **sin —,** nevertheless, notwithstanding.

embebido, -a, absorbed, intent, engrossed, engaged.

embestida, *f.*, attack, assault, onset.

embestir, to strike, collide, attack, rush against.

embravecido, -a, enraged, furious; swollen.

embreado, -a, tarred.

embriagar, to transport, enrapture; **—se,** to become intoxicated.

embriaguez, *f.*, intoxication, drunkenness.

embromar, to annoy, tease, provoke, vex, taunt; joke, banter.

embuste, *m.*, fib, deception, trick

eminencia, *f.*, hill, height.

emoción, *f.*, emotion, feeling.

emolumento, *m.*, emolument, fee, perquisite.

empalidecer, to blanch, grow white, pale.

empapado, -a, drenched, soaked; imbued.

empaquetar, to pack.

emparejado, -a, side by side, together.

empeñado, -a (en), in debt for, mortgaged.

empeñar, to pledge, gage; **—se (en),** to insist, persist.

empeño, *m.*, determination, firmness, earnest desire; **con —,** eagerly, steadily, earnestly.

empezar (á), to begin.

empiece, *etc.*, *v.* **empezar.**

empinarse, to stand on tiptoe.

emplear, to employ, engage

—**se (en)**, to employ oneself, engage in; busy *or* devote oneself.
emprendedor, –a, enterprising, venturesome; clever, capable.
emprender, to undertake, engage in, venture on.
empujar, to push, drive, shove.
empujón, *m.*, push, shove.
empuñar, to grasp, seize, take hold of, clutch.
en, in, into, inside of; on, upon; for; at.
enaguas, *f. pl.*, skirt, petticoat.
enajenamiento, *m.*, absorption, preoccupation, absence of mind.
enajenar, to transfer, sell.
enamorado, –a, in love, enamoured.
enamorado, –a, *m. & f.*, lover, love.
encalmado, –a, becalmed.
encaminado, –a, directed, addressed.
encaminar, to guide, direct; —**se**, to direct one's steps to, make one's way, take the road, go toward.
encanto, *m.*, charm, spell.
encapotado, –a, cloudy, overcast.
encaramado, –a, perched, settled.
encarar, to face, confront; —**se (con)**, to face.
encarecer, to exaggerate, praise, applaud.
encargado, –a, employed, commissioned.
encargar, to order; —**se (con** *or* **de)**, to take charge, undertake.
encarnado, –a, red, scarlet.
encender, to light, kindle; burn; —**se de rubor**, to blush.
encendido, –a, red; excited, violent, angry, heated, furious.
enciende, *etc.*, *v.* **encender.**
encerrar, to enclose, surround, shut *or* lock up.
encima, on, on top (of), upon; over, above; — **de**, upon, over; **por — de**, over.
enclavado, –a, nailed, fastened, fixed, set.
encogerse, to shrink, contract; shrug.
encolerizado, –a, angry, irritated, provoked.
encomio, *m.*, praise, commendation, approval.
encontrar, to meet, encounter, find; —**se**, to be; —**se (con)**, to meet.
encuentran, *etc.*, *v.* **encontrar.**
encuentro, *m.*, encounter, meeting; **salir**, *or* **ir al — de**, to go to meet *or* go in quest of, someone *or* something (*noun may be understood, e.g. p. 7, l. 3.*)
enderezar, to direct; — **los pasos**, to go.
endulzar, to sweeten, soften, tone down; —**se**, to soften.
enemigo, –a, *m. & f.*, enemy, foe.
energía, *f.*, energy, vigor, force.
enérgico, –a, energetic, vigorous, lively, expressive.
enero, *m.*, January.
enfadar, to provoke, vex, offend; —**se**, to become angry, be vexed *or* offended.
énfasis, *m.*, emphasis.
enfático, –a, emphatic.
enfermo, –a, sick, ill.
enfurecido, –a, enraged, infuriated.
enganchar, to hook, connect.
engañar, to deceive, swindle, cheat, trick, impose upon.
engatusar, to inveigle, entice, entrap.
engendrar, to beget, produce.
engrosar, to enlarge, grow, swell; broaden, expand.

engullir, to devour, bolt.
enigma, *m.*, riddle.
enjuagar, to rinse, wash out.
enjugar, to dry, wipe.
enjuto, -a, thin, lean; withered, wrinkled.
enlazar, to join, clasp; **—se (con),** to become allied with, become related by marriage.
ennegrecer, to darken, blacken.
enojar, to anger, irritate; **—se,** to become angry, be offended, displeased.
enorme, enormous, huge, mighty.
enredado, -a, entangled, twisted, knotted, caught.
enredar, to interfere; **—se (sobre),** to become concerned with, "turn" (upon).
enrejado, -a, latticed, grated, barred.
enriquecido, -a, enriched.
enrojecer, to redden; **—se,** to grow red, burn red.
enronquecido, -a, hoarse.
ensanchar, to widen, enlarge, extend.
ensenada, *f.*, small bay, cove, harbor.
enseñar, to show, teach.
enseres, *m. pl.*, implements, household goods, chattels, utensils.
ensordecer, to deafen.
entablar, to begin, introduce, establish.
entender, to understand, comprehend.
entendimiento, *m.*, understanding, discernment, intelligence, knowledge.
enteramente, fully, completely, entirely; quite.
enterarse (de), to find out, verify; inform *or* acquaint oneself.
entero, -a, entire, complete, whole; strong, firm, steady; **por —,** entirely, completely.
entero, *m.*, whole number.
enterrar, to bury.
entiende, *etc.*, *v.* **entender.**
entonces, then, at that time, **por —,** *id.*
entornar, to turn.
entrada, *f.*, entrance, door, gate; arrival, coming.
entrambos, -as, both.
entrañablemente, tenderly, sincerely.
entrar (en), to enter, go in *or* through; take *or* bring in; begin, commence; **—se,** to enter, make one's way into; **al — el día,** at dawn; **— en materia,** to broach the subject.
entre, between, among, in, in the midst of, amid.
entregado, -a, in care of, in charge of.
entregar, to give up, hand over, deliver; put in charge of; **—se (á),** to devote oneself, surrender.
entretener, to delay, linger, stop.
entretuvo, *etc.*, *v.* **entretener.**
entrevista, *f.*, interview, meeting.
enviar, to send, despatch.
envidiar, to envy, covet, grudge.
envidioso, -a, *m. & f.*, covetous, envious person.
envoltura, *f.*, wrapping, covering.
envolver, to envelop, wrap up, surround.
envuelto, -a, *p.p.* **envolver.**
epigrama, *m.*, epigram, witticism.
época, *f.*, epoch, time, age.
equivocación, *f.*, mistake, blunder, misunderstanding.
erguido, -a, erect; dauntless.
erguirse, to draw oneself up, stand erect.
erizado, -a, bristling.
erizar, to set *or* make stand on end.

erizo, *m.*, sea-urchin.
erudición, *f.*, erudition, learning, knowledge.
es, *v.* **ser**; — **que**, the fact is.
esbelto, -**a**, graceful, willowy, lithe, tall, well-shaped.
escabeche, pickled fish.
escalar, to scale, clamber on *or* up, mount; — **á pico**, to climb straight up, outright.
escalera, *f.*, stair, steps.
escalofrío, *m.*, chill, shiver.
escandalizar, to scandalize, raise a scandal, disturbance.
escándalo, *m.*, scandal, disturbance.
escandaloso, -**a**, scandalous, disgraceful, shameful.
escapar, to escape, get *or* run away; —**se**, to flee, make one's escape.
escaramuzar, to skirmish, quarrel.
escarpado, -**a**, rough, rugged, steep.
escaso, -**a**, scanty, limited, scarce; defective.
escena, *f.*, scene; sight, incident.
esclarecido, -**a**, illustrious, honorable, eminent.
escoba, *f.*, broom.
escoger, to select, choose, pick out.
escogitar, to meditate, find out, invent, devise.
escoltado, -**a**, escorted, accompanied.
escondido, -**a**, concealed, lurking.
esconderse, to hide.
escondite, *m.*, hiding-place.
escota, *f.*, sheet, sheet-rope.
escribano, *m.*, clerk, notary.
escrupulosamente, minutely, carefully.
escrutador, -**a**, scrutinizing, searching, inquiring.
escrutar, to scrutinize, scan, examine closely, search.
escuadra, *f.*, squadron; fleet.
escuadrón, *m.*, squadron, troop.
escuchar, to listen (to), hear, hearken.
escudo, *m.*, escutcheon, shield, coat of arms.
escuela, *f.*, school.
esforzadamente, strenuously, valiantly.
esforzarse (**en**), to make an effort, exert oneself, endeavor.
esfuerzo, *m.*, effort, attempt, endeavor; spirit, courage.
eso, *neut.*, that; **por** —, on that account.
espacio, *m.*, space, room, place; time, interval; **en largo** —, for a long time.
espalda, *f.*, back, shoulders; **á** —**s**, *p. 32, n. 2.*
espanto, *m.*, terror, dismay, consternation, horror.
espantoso, -**a**, frightful, horrible, dreadful.
esparcir, to scatter, spread around; give forth.
espasmo, spasm, thrill.
especie, *f.*, news, report, story.
espectáculo, *m.*, spectacle, show.
espectador, -**a**, *m.* & *f.*, spectator, onlooker, observer, witness.
espejillo, *m.*, little looking-glass, mirror.
esperanza, *f.*, hope, expectation.
esperar, to hope, wait for, await, look for, expect; **era de** —, was to be expected.
espesar, to grow thick *or* close, become dense, deepen.
espeso, -**a**, thick.
espíritu, *m.*, spirit, mind, heart.
espiritualismo, *m.*, spirituality, piety.
esposa, *f.*, wife.
esposo, *m.*, husband.
espuma, *f.*, foam, froth.
estación, *f.*, season; condition. situation.

estado, *m.*, state, stage, condition.
estallar, to burst, explode, crack, break out into fury.
estamento, *m.*, estate; **tercer —,** commons.
estampa, *f.*, print, cut, engraving.
estancia, *f.*, room.
estante, shelf, stand, set of shelves.
este, *m.*, east, orient, levant.
Esteban, *m.*, Stephen.
estimación, *f.*, esteem, regard.
estimar, to value, regard, esteem.
estío, *m.*, summer.
estipendio, *m.*, stipend, wages, pay, fee.
estirón, *m.*, pull, jerk, haul.
estirpe, *m.*, race, origin.
estómago, *m.*, stomach.
estorbar, to disturb, annoy, hinder, be in the way.
estorbo, *m.*, hindrance, impediment.
estrago, *m.*, damage, ravage, havoc.
estrechar, to press, clasp.
estrecho, -a, narrow; tight, close.
estrella, *f.*, star.
estrellado, -a, starry; clear.
estremecerse, to tremble, shudder, shiver, quiver.
estremecimiento, *m.*, tremor, shiver, thrill.
estrépito, *m.*, noise, din, disturbance; crash.
estriado, -a, striped, streaked.
estridente, shrill, harsh, grating.
estropeado, -a, ragged, tattered.
estruendo, *m.*, booming, thundering, roar, turmoil.
estruendoso, -a, roaring, thundering, crashing.
etc., etcétera, y así sigue, —.
Eugenio, *m.*, Eugene.
evento, *m.*, event, occurrence; accident.
evitar, to avoid, escape; spare, save.
exacto, -a, exact, faithful.
exaltación, *f.*, exaltation, excitement.
exaltado, -a, hot, vehement, precipitate.
exánime, weak, breathless, lifeless, spiritless.
exasperado, -a, exasperated, enraged, offended.
exceptuar, to except, exclude.
exceso, *m.*, excess, indulgence, luxury; **con —,** excessively, extremely.
excitar, to excite, stir (up), arouse.
exclamación, *f.*, exclamation, remark.
exclamar, to exclaim, cry out, burst forth.
exclusivamente, exclusively, entirely, wholly.
excomulgar, to excommunicate.
excomunión, *f.*, excommunication.
excursión, *f.*, —, trip, journey.
exento, -a, exempt, free.
exhalar, to exhale, breathe *or* give forth, emit.
exigir, (*pers. indir. obj.*), to urge, compel, exact, demand.
exiguo, -a, spare, thin, small.
existencia, *f.*, existence, life.
existir, to exist.
éxito, *m.*, result, issue.
expansión, *f.*, —, relaxation, fellowship, intercourse.
expeditamente, promptly, speedily.
experiencia, *f.*, experience, practice.
experimentado, -a, experienced, expert.
experimentar, to experience; prove, try, test.
explicación, *f.*, explanation.
explicar, to explain.

explorar, to explore, search, scrutinize.
exponer, to exhibit, expose, disclose, bring forward.
expósito, -a, exposed, abandoned, deserted; **niño —,** foundling.
expresión, *f.*, expression, declaration, statement.
exprofeso, on purpose.
expuesto, -a (á), *p.p.* **exponer,** liable, exposed; in danger.
exquisito, -a, exquisite, delightful, delicious.
extático, -a, ecstatic, blissful.
extender, to extend, prolong, put forth, stretch, spread.
extendido, -a, spacious, extensive.
extensión, *f.*, expanse, extent, space.
extraer, to extract, draw out.
extrañar, to wonder, marvel; **—se,** to be surprised, astonished.
extraño, -a, strange; **lo —,** strangeness.
extraordinario, -a, extraordinary, remarkable, strange.
extraviado, -a, out-of-the-way, unfrequented, remote.
extravío, *m.*, extravagance, exaggeration, aberration.
extrayendo, *etc.*, *v.* **extraer.**
extremadamente, exceedingly, extremely.
extremado, -a, extreme, intense.
extremamente, extremely.

F

fábrica, *f.*, factory.
fabricante, *m.*, manufacturer.
facción, *f.*, feature.
fácil, easy, light; likely, probable.
fácilmente, easily.
facultad, *f.*, power, right, authority; capacity, ability, knack.
faena, *f.*, work, task, toil.
faja, *f.*, belt, sash, girdle; band, border.
falsete, *m.*, falsetto.
falso, -a, false, insincere, deceitful, hypocritical; insecure.
falta, *f.*, fault, shortcoming, offense, lack, absence, want; **sin —,** without fail; **hacer —** (*pers. indir. obj.*), to need, lack.
faltar (á), to need, lack, be in want of; fail, fall short of, be wanting in; be absent, missing *or* lacking, (*obj. in Eng. becomes subj. in Sp.; subj. in Eng. becomes indir. obj.*).
fama, *f.*, fame, reputation, [name.
familia, *f.*, family.
fanega, *f.*, measure of grain (1.60 bu.); *v. p. 25, n. 3.*
fantasía, *f.*, fancy, imagination.
fantasma, *m.*, phantom, spectre.
fantástico, -a, fantastic, fanciful, whimsical.
faramalla, *f.*, trick.
fardo, *m.*, load, burden.
farol, *m.*, lantern, light.
farolillo, *m.*, *dim.* **farol.**
fatal, —, ominous.
fatigoso, -a, tiresome, fatiguing, wearisome, troublesome, painful, exhausting.
fauces, *f. pl.*, gullet.
favor, *m.*, **—,** kindness, aid.
favorable, —, propitious, pleasant.
favorecer, to favor, help, befriend, protect.
faz, *f.*, face.
fe, *f.*, faith, belief.
febrero, *m.*, February.
Federico, *m.*, Frederic.
felicidad, *f.*, felicity, happiness.
feliz, happy, prosperous, fortunate, successful.

femenino, -a, feminine.
fenecer, to die away, come to an end; finish, conclude.
feo, -a, ugly, homely, hideous; grim, threatening.
feraz, fertile, fruitful.
Fernando, *m.*, Ferdinand.
ferocidad, *f.*, fierceness, fury, savageness.
feroz, cruel, fierce, pitiless, remorseless.
festivo, -a, festive, gay, jolly.
feudal, —, lordly, aristocratic.
feudatario, -a, *m. & f.*, vassal.
fiar (de *or* **en),** to trust, confide in, give credit.
ficticio, -a, fictitious, artificial, false, unnatural.
fiel, faithful, devoted, loyal; accurate, exact.
fielmente, honestly; exactly, accurately.
fiera, *f.*, wild beast; fury.
fiero, -a, fierce, terrible.
fiesta, *f.*, feast, celebration, commemoration.
figura, *f.*, figure, form, shape; face.
figurar, to figure; **—se,** to fancy, imagine.
figurilla, *f.*, insignificant little figure.
fijamente, fixedly, steadfastly, intently.
fijar, to fasten, fix; **—se (en),** to observe, notice.
fijo, -a, fixed, certain, settled; **á punto —,** exactly.
filtrar, to filter.
fin, *m. & f.*, end, conclusion; object, purpose; **á —de (que),** so as to, so that, in order to; **al —,** at last; **con el — de que,** to the end that, with the purpose that; **en —,** in short, finally; **por —,** at last, finally.
finalmente, finally, at last.
fingir, *to feign,* pretend, sham.
fino, -a, fine, thin, delicate; good, nice, refined.
firma, *f.*, signature.
firmamento, *m.*, firmament, sky, heavens.
firmar, to sign.
firme, firm, steady, resolute; **de —,** hard.
firmeza, *f.*, firmness, fixedness, certainty.
flaco, -a, thin, lean, meagre; frail, feeble.
flaqueza, *f.*, weakness, frailty.
flor, *f.*, flower, blossom, bloom.
florentino, -a, Florentine.
florido, -a, flowery, elegant.
flotar, to float.
flote, á —, afloat.
flujo, *m.*, flow; **— de risa,** burst *or* fit of laughter.
fogoso, -a, fiery, hot, impetuous.
folio, *m.*, leaf.
follaje, *m.*, foliage, leafage.
fomentar, to encourage, promote, excite.
fondo, *m.*, bottom, depth; background; *pl.*, funds; **necesitado de —,** "hard up."
forastero, *m.*, stranger.
forjar, to form, invent, fabricate.
forma, *f.*, form, figure, shape; **—verbal,** utterance.
formalmente, formally, seriously.
formar, to form, make up; **— intención de,** to resolve.
formidable, —, dreadful, very great, very difficult.
fortaleza, *f.*, force, strength, vigor; fortitude, endurance.
fortúito, -a, fortuitous, accidental.
fortuna, *f.*, fortune, fate; luck, success; **por —,** luckily, fortunately.
forzoso, -a, necessary, indispensable, requisite.
fotografía, *f.*, picture, photograph.

fragata, *f.*, frigate.
fragor, *m.*, noise, clamor, uproar, crash.
Francisco, *m.*, Francis.
franja, *f.*, fringe, border.
franqueza, *f.*, frankness, freedom, sincerity; **con —,** candidly.
frase, *f.*, phrase, sentence, remark.
frecuentar, to frequent.
frecuente, frequent, usual, common.
freír, to fry.
frenéticamente, wildly, frantically, madly.
frente, *f.*, forehead, brow; *m.*, countenance, face, front.
frente, *adv.*, opposite, in front; **— á,** in front of, facing, before; **— á —,** face to face.
fresco, -a, fresh, cool, refreshing; ruddy, rosy.
fresco, *m.*, coolness, refreshing air.
frescura, *f.*, freshness, coolness.
frío, -a, cold, chill; heartless, unsympathetic.
frío, *m.*, cold.
frondoso, -a, leafy, luxuriant.
fruncido, -a, ruffled, furrowed, wrinkled; frowning, cross.
fruncirse, to curl, be ruffled.
fruta, *f.*, fruit.
fuego, *m.*, fire, blaze; **dar —,** to light, set fire to.
fuente, *f.*, spring, fountain.
fuera, out, outside.
fuerte, strong, stout, vigorous; healthy, hale.
fuertemente, forcibly, fast, firmly; violently, intensely, excessively.
fuerza, *f.*, firmness, strength, force, resolution, courage, energy; **á — de,** by dint of; **con —,** forcibly.
Fulano, -a, So-and-So.
fulgor, *m.*, light, radiance, splendor, effulgence.
función, *f.*, entertainment, play.
funcionar, to operate, work, toil.
funcionario, *m.*, functionary, public official.
fundar, to found, erect, establish; base, ground.
fundado, -a, reasonable, well-founded.
furia, *f.*, rage, fury.
furioso, -a, furious, mad, frantic, violent.
furor, *m.*, fury, frenzy, rage, anger.
furtivamente, stealthily, furtively.

G

gafas, *f. pl.*, spectacles.
galante, courtly, attentive.
galantería, *f.*, gallantry, courtesy, elegance.
galeote, *m.*, galley-slave.
gallardo, -a, gallant, brave; dashing, elegant.
gallina, *f.*, hen.
gallinero, *m.*, poultry-yard, henhouse.
gamo, *m.*, buck.
gana, *f.*, desire, inclination, willingness, mind; hunger, appetite; **de buena —** *or* **con —s,** willingly; **tener —s de,** to have a mind to.
ganancia, *f.*, earning, profit.
ganar, to gain, earn, make.
garganta, *f.*, throat, gorge.
gasa, *f.*, gauze, netting.
Gaspar, *m.*, Jasper.
gastar, to spend; use, wear wear out; **—se,** to spend.
gato, *m.*, cat.
gaviota, *f.*, sea-gull.
gemido, *m.*, sigh, moan, groan.
general, *m.*, —, usual, common.
generalmente, generally.

genérico, -a, generic, comprehensive.
generoso, -a, generous, liberal, open-handed; unselfish.
genio, *m.*, temperament, disposition, nature.
gente, *f.*, people.
gentil, pretty, nice, refined, charming.
gesto, *m.*, gesture.
girar, to turn.
globo, *m.*, globe, earth.
glorioso, -a, glorious, exalted, honorable.
glosa, *f.*, comment, explanation.
gobernar, to steer.
gobierno, *m.*, government.
goce, *m.*, joy, pleasure; diversion, entertainment.
golosina, *f.*, dainty; *pl.*, sweetmeats, bonbons.
golpe, *m.*, blow, shock; slam (of a door); group, crowd; **— de mar,** surge, heavy sea; **de —,** all at once, at a blow.
gordo, -a, fat, stout, plump.
gorra, *f.*, cap.
gorrón, *m.*, parasite, hanger-on.
gota, *f.*, drop.
goterón, *m.*, big, heavy (rain) drop.
gozar (con *or* **de),** to enjoy; **—se (en),** to rejoice (in).
gozo, *m.*, pleasure, joy, satisfaction.
gozoso, -a, cheerful, joyous, blissful.
gracias, *f. pl.*, thanks.
gracioso, -a, graceful, attractive; gracious, kind; funny, comical.
grado, *m.*, will, willingness; **de buen —,** willingly.
grado, *m.*, grade, degree; **en — sumo,** exceedingly, excessively.
gran, grande, large, big; great, grand, eminent.
grandemente, greatly, extremely.
granizada, *f.*, hailstorm, hail.
grasa, *f.*, grease.
grasiento, -a, greasy, soiled.
grato, -a, pleasant, agreeable.
grave, —, serious, solemn.
gravedad, *f.*, gravity, seriousness, soberness.
gravemente, gravely, soberly.
gremio, *m.*, guild, corporation.
griego, -a, Greek.
grieta, *f.*, groove, crevice, cranny.
gris, gray.
grita, *f.*, shouting, clamor, outcry, uproar.
gritar, to shout, shriek, call, cry.
grito, *m.*, shout, scream, cry; **á —s,** loudly, noisily, clamorously.
grosería, *f.*, discourtesy, rudeness, impertinence.
grosero, -a, rude, rough; coarse, indelicate.
grotesco, -a, grotesque, ridiculous, absurd.
grueso, -a, great, big, rough, heavy.
gruñendo, *etc.*, *v.* **gruñir.**
gruñir, to grumble, growl.
grupo, *m.*, group.
guapo, -a, handsome, good-looking, comely.
guardar, to guard, keep, put away; protect, watch over, take care of; maintain; retain; **— semejanza con,** to resemble; **— silencio,** to be silent.
guardia, *f.*, guard, soldier; policeman; watch.
guerra, *f.*, war.
guerrero, *m.*, warrior, soldier.
guiar, to guide, lead, direct.
guijo, *m.*, small pebble, gravel.
guiñar, to wink.
guiño, *m.*, wink.
guisa, *f.*, guise, manner; **á — de,** by way of, like.

guisar, to cook, prepare.
gules, *m. pl.*, gules, red (*in heraldry*).
gustar (*pers. indir. obj.*), to please, be agreeable *or* pleasing to; — **(de),** to like, enjoy, be fond of.
gusto, *m.*, taste, liking, pleasure, gratification.
gustoso, -a, willing(ly), readi(ly), cheerful(ly), contented(ly).

H

Habana (la), Havana.
haber, *as aux.*, to have; *impers.*, (there) to be; **hay,** there is, there are; **había,** there was, there were; **hubo,** *id.*, *etc.*; — + **de** + *inf.*, to have to, expressive of futurity *or* mild obligation; **lo que has de hacer,** what you are to do; **hay que,** it is necessary, one must; **lo que hay es,** the fact is; **no había más que,** one had only . . .
hábil, handy, apt, clever.
habilidad, *f.*, skill, dexterity, cleverness, expertness, cunning.
habitación, *f.*, room, apartment.
habitante, *m.*, inhabitant, resident, dweller.
habitar (en), to inhabit, live *or* dwell in.
habituado, -a, (á), accustomed.
hablar, to talk, speak.
hacendoso, -a, industrious, diligent.
hacer, to make, do, cause; form, compose; take (a trip, journey, an oath); **—se,** to become; *impers.* (of weather), be; — . . **años,** years ago; — . . . **tiempo,** time ago *or* since; — **rato,** a while ago; **no hacía poco tiempo,** for a long time, long since; — + *Inf.*, have something done; — **caso,** to mind, notice; **—se cargo (de),** to realize; — **falta,** *v.* **falta**; — **el favor de** (*in dir. address*), please; — **la guardia,** to be on duty, watch; — **las paces,** to make peace.
hacia, towards, in the direction of, near; — **adelante,** forward.
hacienda, *f.*, property.
haga, *etc.*, *v.* **hacer.**
halagar, to flatter, cajole, allure.
halagüeño, -a, flattering, attractive, alluring, endearing.
hallar, to find, come across, meet; discover; **—se,** to be; *v. p. 59, n. 2.*
hambre, *f.*, hunger, appetite; scarcity, famine, want.
hambriento, -a, hungry, ravening, starved.
harás, *etc.*, *v.* **hacer.**
harto, sufficiently, quite, enough.
hasta, up to, as far as, till, until, to the point of; — **que,** until; — **ahora,** until now, hitherto; *adv.*, even.
haz, *f.*, face, surface.
haz, *imper.* **hacer.**
hé aquí, behold! lo!
hechicería, *f.*, enchantment, witchcraft.
hecho, -a, *p.p.* **hacer.**
hecho, *m.*, act, fact, event.
hembra, *f.*, woman, lady.
heráldica, *f.*, heraldry.
heraldo, *m.*, herald, harbinger.
heredar, to inherit.
herencia, *f.*, inheritance.
herida, *f.*, wound, injury, affliction.
herir, to wound, stab, hurt, touch.
hermana, *f.*, sister.
hermanita, *f.*, *dim.*, **hermana.**
hermano, *m.*, brother.
Hermenegildo, *m.*, Hermenegild.

hermosa, *f.*, beauty, belle.
hermoso, -a, handsome, beautiful, comely.
heroísmo, *m.*, heroism; **con —,** heroically, bravely.
hice, *etc.*, *v.* **hacer.**
hidalgo, *m.*, nobleman; *adj.*, noble, illustrious.
hierba, *f.*, grass, weed.
hierbecita, *dim.* **hierba.**
hierro, *m.*, iron; poker.
higo, *m.*, fig.
hija, *f.*, child, daughter.
hijo, *m.*, son; *pl.*, children.
hilo, *m.*, thread, line.
hinchado, -a, swollen, puffed up, puffy, fluffy.
hinchar, to swell, fill, puff up; **—se,** to grow arrogant, overbearing, be puffed up with pride.
hipocresía, hypocrisy, falseness.
hipótesis, *f.*, hypothesis, supposition.
hirió, *etc.*, *v.* **herir.**
hirviente, boiling, seething, raging.
historia, *f.*, history, story, tale.
histórico, -a, historical.
hizo, *etc.*, *v.* **hacer.**
hogar, *m.*, hearth, fire-place.
hogaza, *f.*, large loaf.
hoguera, *f.*, blaze, bonfire; stake.
hoja, *f.*, leaf.
¡hola! hallo!
holganza, *f.*, laziness, idleness; inactivity, leisure, ease.
hombre, *m.*, man.
hombro, *m.*, shoulder.
homenaje, *m.*, homage, respect.
hondamente, profoundly, deeply.
hondo, -a, deep, profound.
hora, *f.*, hour, time, season; **— de cenar,** supper-time; **— de comer,** dinner-time; **á la media —,** within half an hour; *v. p. 42, n. 2.*
horca, *f.*, gallows.
horizonte, *m.*, horizon.
horno, *m.*, oven, furnace.
horrorizar, to horrify, terrify
hosco, -a, sullen, sulky, gloomy.
hospedaje, *m.*, lodging.
hospitalario, -a, hospitable.
hostigado, -a, driven, harassed galled.
hoy, to-day, now, at present; **— mismo,** this very day.
hoz, *f.*, sickle, reaping-hook.
hueco, -a, hollow, muffled, empty.
hueco, *m.*, hollow, hole, gap.
huela, *etc.*, *v.* **oler.**
huérfano, -a, *m.* & *f.*, orphan.
huerta, *f.*, (large) orchard, vegetable garden.
huerto, *m.*, (small) orchard, kitchen-garden.
hueso, *m.*, bone.
huevo, *m.*, egg.
huir, to flee, escape; avoid.
humilde, humble, meek, modest, unassuming.
humildemente, humbly, meekly, submissively.
humillación, *f.*, humiliation.
humillante, humiliating, mortifying.
humillarse, to humble *or* lower oneself.
humo, *m.*, smoke.
humor, *m.*, disposition, mood; **seguir el —,** to indulge *or* respect (one's) mood.
humorado, -a, humored, disposed; **mal —,** in a bad humor, ill-disposed, peevish.
hundido, -a, sunken, deep-set.
hundir, to sink, bury; **—se,** to sink.
huracán, *m.*, hurricane, gale.
huracanado, -a, in a hurricane, tempestuous(ly), furious(ly).
huyen, *etc.*, *v.* **huir.**
huyendo, *etc.*, *v.* **huir.**

I

iba, *etc., v.* **ir.**
ida, *f.*, going, departure.
ídolo, *m.*, idol.
iglesia, *f.*, church.
ignorante, unlearned, stupid.
igual, equal, same, alike.
igualmente, equally; alike, likewise, also.
ijar, *m.*, side.
ileso, -a, unharmed, free, safe and sound.
iluminar, to illuminate; **—se,** to light up, color.
ilustre, illustrious, noble, glorious.
imagen, *f.*, image, figure, statue.
imaginación, *f.*, imagination, fancy, mind.
imaginar, to imagine, fancy; conceive, scheme.
imán, *m.*, magnet; attraction, charm.
impaciencia, *f.*, impatience, restlessness, eagerness.
impaciente, impatient, restless.
impasible, quiet(ly), impassive(ly), indifferent(ly).
impedir, to hinder, prevent.
imperativo, -a, imperative, imperious, authoritative, commanding.
imperio, *m.*, imperiousness, authority.
impertinente, meddlesome, impertinent, intrusive; peevish, querulous.
ímpetu, *m.*, force, violence, impetuosity.
impetuoso, -a, impetuous, impulsive, violent, passionate.
impide, *etc., v.* **impedir.**
imponente, imposing, impressive.
imponer, to impose, enjoin.
importancia, *f.*, importance, weight, significance.
importante, important, famous, celebrated.
importar, to be important, matter.
imposibilidad, *f.*, impossibility, impracticability.
imposible, impossible, unfeasible, very difficult.
impotente, powerless, helpless, unable.
impresión, *f.*, impression, effect.
impresionable, impressionable, sensitive.
impresionar, to impress, affect.
imprevisión, *f.*, improvidence, lack of foresight, negligence.
improviso, de —, suddenly, unexpectedly.
imprudente, imprudent, indiscreet.
impulsar, to move, impel, drive.
inadvertencia, *f.*, accident, carelessness, inattention, oversight.
incesante, incessant, constant, unceasing.
incidente, *m.*, incident, occurrence, circumstance.
inclemencia, *f.*, harshness, severity, rigor.
inclinación, *f.*, inclination, bent; preference, liking, fondness.
inclinado, -a, inclined, disposed, minded.
inclinar, to incline, bow; **—se (de),** to bend over, lean over.
incomodar, to incommode, put out, inconvenience.
incomparablemente, incomparably.
incompleto, -a, incomplete, imperfect, defective.
increíble, incredible, astonishing.
increpar, to scold, chide, reproach.
indagación, *f.*, inquiry, investigation.

indagar, to investigate, search out, trace.
indecible, inexpressible, unspeakable, indescribable.
indeciso, -a, undecided, unsettled, variable, changeable.
indecoroso, -a, unbecoming, improper.
independencia, *f.*, independence, freedom.
indescriptible, indescribable.
indicado, -a, indicated, fixed, set.
indicar, to indicate, show, suggest, point out.
indiferencia, *f.*, unconcern.
indiferente, indifferent, unconcerned.
indignación, *f.*, indignation, resentment, rage.
indignado, -a, indignant, wrathful.
indignarse, to become angry, indignant.
indigno, -a, mean, unworthy, despicable, unbecoming.
indispensable, —, necessary, usual.
inducir, to influence, persuade, lead.
indujo, *etc.*, *v.* **inducir**.
inesperadamente, suddenly, unexpectedly.
infame, despicable, infamous, wicked, vile.
infancia, *f.*, infancy.
infantería, *f.*, infantry.
infantil, infantile, childish.
infeliz, unfortunate, unlucky, unhappy, wretched.
infierno, *m.*, hell.
infinito, -a, infinite, boundless, immense; numberless.
infinito, *m.*, infinity, boundless tract *or* waste, immensity.
inflexión, *f.*, inflection, modulation.
infligir, to inflict, impose.
influjo, *m.*, influence, power.
infortunio, *m.*, misfortune, ill-luck, calamity.
infructuoso, -a, fruitless, vain, unsuccessful.
infundir, (*pers. indir. obj.*), to imbue, infuse; inspire with.
ingenio, *m.*, mental faculties, temperament, mind.
ingreso, *m.*, entrance, entry.
inhabitable, uninhabitable.
iniciar(se), to begin, commence.
injuria, *f.*, injury, insult.
injuriar, to injure, offend, insult.
injurioso, -a, insulting, offensive, abusive.
injusticia, *f.*, injustice, unfairness, wrong.
injustificado, -a, unjustifiable, unjust.
inmediatamente, immediately, forthwith.
inmediato, -a, immediate, near, adjoining.
inmenso, -a, immense, unbounded, infinite.
inminente, impending, near.
inmóvil, immovable, motionless, quiet.
inmundicia, *f.*, filth, dirt, garbage.
inmutable, unchangeable, immutable.
inmutarse, to change countenance.
inocencia, *f.*, innocence, simplicity.
inocente, innocent, simple, guileless.
inocente, *m. & f.*, fool, dunce simpleton.
inofensivo, -a, inoffensive, mild.
inopinadamente, unexpectedly.
inquietar, to disturb, trouble, worry, molest, harass, fret.
inquieto, -a, restless, uneasy, anxious.
inquietud, *f.*, restlessness, uneasiness, agitation.

Inquisición, *f.*, Inquisition.
inquisitorial, inquisitive, questioning, prying.
inseguro, -a, uncertain, insecure, unsteady; **lo —,** the uncertainty, tremor (of the voice).
insensible, —, unconscious; unimpressed, indifferent.
insinuar, (*pers. indir. obj.*), to insinuate, suggest, hint.
insistir, to insist, persist.
insolente, insolent, impertinent, bold.
inspiración, *f.*, inspiration.
inspirar, to inspire, affect (with), cause, rouse, excite.
instancia, *f.*, urgency, earnestness; **con —,** earnestly, insistently.
instante, *m.*, moment, instant; **al —,** instantly, immediately; **á los pocos —s,** in a few moments.
instar, to urge, press.
instinto, *m.*, instinct.
instrumento, *m.*, instrument, implement, tool, utensil; **—s de pesca,** fishing-tackle.
insultar, to insult.
insulto, *m.*, insult, insolence, affront.
integral, integral, necessary.
integridad, *f.*, integrity, wholeness, safety.
inteligencia, *f.*, intelligence, understanding, sense.
intemperie, *f.*, bad, rough weather; exposure.
intención, *f.*, intention, purpose, plan; **formar —,** to resolve.
intencional, designed, intentional.
intentar, to attempt, try, undertake.
interés, *m.*, interest, profit, concern; *pl.*, money affairs, business matters.
interesado, -a, interested, concerned, solicitous; *n.*, interested person.
interjección, *f.*, exclamation.
interlocutor, *m.*, —, speaker.
interrogar, to question, inquire of.
interrumpido, -a, interrupted, intermittent, broken.
interrumpir, to interrupt, cut off, discontinue.
intervalo, *m.*, interval.
intervenir, to come in, take part in, share.
intrigante, intriguing, cunning, crafty, underhanded; *n.*, intriguer, schemer.
introducir, to introduce, usher; **—se,** to get *or* go into.
introdujo, *etc.*, *v.* **introducir.**
inundar, to flood, fill.
inusitado, -a, unusual, unseasonable, extraordinary.
inútil, useless, idle, fruitless.
inutilizar, to make *or* render useless, disable.
inútilmente, uselessly, in vain.
invadido, -a, encroached upon, invaded, covered.
invencible, invincible, unconquerable, insuperable.
invertir, to invest, employ, lay out, spend.
investigar, to investigate, examine.
invierno, *m.*, winter.
invitar, to invite, bid, ask.
ir, to go, walk; continue, proceed, be; **—se,** to go away, go off, depart; — + *gerund*, to keep on, continue, grow, become, begin to; **—(se) á pique,** to go down, founder.
ira, *f.*, anger, fury, rage, wrath, indignation.
iracundo, -a, wrathful, furious
irguió, *etc.*, *v.* **erguir.**
irónico, -a, ironical.

irracional, irrational, unreasonable.
irradiar, to irradiate, shed.
irritado, -a, irritated, irate, angry, vexed.
Isabel, Isabel(la), Elizabeth.
izar, to hoist, haul up.
izquierdo, -a, left.

J

jabón, *m.*, soap.
jadeante, breathless, panting.
jamás, never; ever.
jamón, *m.*, ham.
Joaquín, *m.*, Joachim.
jocoso, -a, jocose, facetious, comical.
jolgorio, *m.*, festivity, merry-making.
José, *m.*, Joseph.
joven, young, youthful.
joven, *m. & f.*, young man, youth; young woman, girl.
Juan, *m.*, John.
jueves, *m.*, Thursday.
juez, *m.*, judge, justice.
jugar, to play, frolic, romp; — **á,** to play (game); — **papel principal,** to play a principal *or* leading rôle.
juicio, *m.*, judgment; sense, mind; — **cabal,** right senses.
julio, *m.*, July.
junio, *m.*, June.
juntar, to join, connect; **—se (con),** to join, assemble, gather together (with).
junto, -a, together.
juramento, *m.*, vow, oath, curse, imprecation.
jurar, to swear, declare.
justicia, *f.*, justice, equity, right.
justificado, -a, justifiable, right; upright, just.
justificar, to justify, vindicate.
justipreciar, to calculate, estimate.
justo, -a, just, fair, right; honorable, upright.
juzgado, *m.*, court of justice, tribunal.
juzgar, to judge, hold, consider.

L

labio, *m.*, lip.
labrado, -a, worked, cultivated; worn, roughened; carved, formed; produced, wrought.
labrador, *m.*, farmer, peasant.
labrar, to devise, construct, work, till; inform, instruct, mould, develop; seam, furrow.
ladearse, to lean, tip, sway, turn on the side.
lado, *m.*, side, margin, edge; **al — de,** beside.
ladrón, -a, *m. & f.*, thief, robber.
lagartija, *f.*, newt, lizard.
lago, *m.*, lake.
lágrima, *f.*, tear.
lamentarse, to lament, mourn, wail, cry.
lamento, *m.*, lament, cry, wail.
lámpara, *f.*, lamp.
lana, *f.*, wool.
lance, *m.*, occurrence, accident, crisis, emergency; contingency.
lancha, *f.*, launch, fishing-smack.
lanzar, to hurl, fling, let loose; dart; give forth, burst into; **—se,** to rush.
lapa, *f.*, shell-fish, barnacle.
largar, to let out, loosen, let go, set free, ease.
largo, -a, long, lengthy, extended, continuous; **á lo — de,** along.
lástima, *f.*, pity, sympathy, compassion.
lastimero, -a, sad, mournful; commiserating, pitying.
lastimoso, -a, pitiful, pathetic.
lastre, *m.*, ballast, weight

latigazo, *m.*, lashing.
latinidad, *f.*, Latinity, Latin.
lavar, to wash, scrub.
lazo, *m.*, bond, knot; snare, trap.
lealtad, *f.*, loyalty, honor.
lección, *f.*, lesson.
lector, *m.*, reader.
lectura, *f.*, reading.
leche, *f.*, milk; **mamar la misma —**, to have the same rearing, be bred alike.
lechoso, -a, milky.
leer, to read, proclaim.
legión, *f.*, —, multitude.
legítimo, -a, legitimate, lawful.
legua, *f.*, league.
legumbre, *f.*, vegetable.
lejano, -a, distant, far off, remote.
lejos, far, far away; **á lo —**, in the distance; **de —**, from a distance, far off.
lengua, *f.*, tongue.
lenguaje, *m.*, language, speech.
lengüeta, *f.*, fluke.
lenitivo, -a, *& n. m.*, lenitive; relief, alleviation.
lentamente, slowly.
lentitud, *f.*, slowness, deliberation.
lento, -a, slow, lingering.
leña, *f.*, wood.
letargo, *m.*, lethargy, drowsiness.
letra, *f.*, letter; *v. p. 18, n. 7.*
levantado, -a, raised up.
levantar, to raise, lift; erect; make (money); remove (*pers. indir. obj.*); **—se**, to get up, rise, stand up.
Levante, *m.*, east; **parte de —**, *id.*
leve, slight, light, faint, soft.
levemente, slightly, lightly, gently, a little.
levita, *f.*, frock-coat.
ley, *f.*, law.
leyese, *etc.*, *v.* **leer**.
libertado, -a, liberated, delivered, rescued.
libra, *f.*, pound.
libre, free, open; independent; clear, unobstructed.
libremente, freely, boldly, unhindered.
libro, *m.*, book.
ligero, -a, light, slight; gay.
limosna, *f.*, alms, charity.
limpiar, to clean, wipe.
linaje, *m.*, lineage, race, house.
lince, *m.*, lynx.
lindo, -a, pretty, lovely.
línea, *f.*, line, boundary.
linfático, -a, lymphatic, phlegmatic; flabby.
lingote, *m.*, ingot.
liso, -a, even, smooth, flat.
lisonjear, to flatter, please, delight, compliment.
lisonjero, -a, flattering, complimentary.
listo, -a, ready, active, clever.
liviano, -a, slight, trifling.
liza, *f.*, lists, field.
lóbrego, -a, gloomy, dismal, dreary.
loco, -a, crazy, insane; **volverse —**, go mad.
loco, -a, *m. & f.*, lunatic.
locura, *f.*, madness; folly, absurdity.
lógica, *f.*, logic.
lograr, to gain, obtain, succeed.
lona, *f.*, canvas, sail.
lucidez, *f.*, lucidity, intelligence.
lúcido, -a, lucid, clear; quick, keen, bright, brilliant.
luciente, shining, gleaming, luminous.
lucrarse, to profit, gain.
lucha, *f.*, struggle, contest, fight.
luchar, to struggle, wrestle, battle.
luego, soon, presently, later, immediately; then, therefore.
luengo, -a, long.
lugar, *m.*, place, spot; small town. village; opportunity,

chance, room; **en — de,** instead of.
lúgubre, mournful, gloomy, melancholy.
luna, *f.*, moon; **de —,** moonlit.
lunes, *m.*, Monday.
luz, *f.*, light; **á la — del sol,** by daylight.

LL

llamamiento, *m.*, call.
llamar, to call, summon, knock, rap; **—se,** to be named.
llameante, flaming, blazing.
llamear, to blaze, flame, flash.
llano, –a, flat, level, even, plain.
llanto, *m.*, crying, weeping
llanura, *f.*, level, plain; expanse, surface.
llegada, *f.*, arrival, coming.
llegar (á), to arrive, reach, come, get to; amount *or* come to; approach, bring near to; **— á tocarse,** to meet; **al —,** at the arrival of, when . . . arrived; **antes de — con mucho,** *v. p. 13, n. 2;* **—se,** to come on, up.
llenar, to fill, stuff.
lleno, –a, full, complete; **de —,** fully.
llevar, to carry, take, bear; conduct, manage; wear; experience (disappointment, annoyance), suffer; (*w. pers. indir. obj.*), take away from.
llorar, to cry, weep; lament, mourn.
lloroso, –a, tear-stained, mournful.
lluvia, *f.*, rain.
lluvioso, –a, rainy, wet.

M

macizo, –a, firm, solid.
madera, *f.*, wood.
madre, *f.*, mother; **¡— del Alma!** Mary! Holy Mother!
madrina, *f.*, godmother.
madrugada, *f.*, early morning, dawn, break of day.
madrugar, to rise very early.
maestro, *m.*, teacher, schoolmaster.
magisterio, *m.*, school-teaching.
magistral, masterly, consummate.
magnético, –a, magnetic.
magnitud, *f.*, magnitude, size.
majestad, *f.*, majesty, dignity, stateliness.
majestuosamente, grandly, magnificently, splendidly.
majestuoso, –a, majestic, stately, lofty; solemn, impressive.
mal, *m.*, evil, misfortune; harm; *adv.*, badly, sick, ill; dishonestly.
maldad, *f.*, mischief, evil, wickedness.
maldecir, to curse.
maldición, *f.*, curse, imprecation.
maldijo, *etc.*, *v.* **maldecir.**
maldito, –a, *p.p.* **maldecir,** cursed, confounded; wicked; damned.
maledicencia, *f.*, gossip, slander.
malestar, uneasiness, discomfort.
malevolencia, *f.*, malevolence, ill-will, spite.
maleza, *f.*, underbrush, bramble.
maliciosamente, maliciously, mischievously.
maligno, –a, mischievous, malicious, spiteful.
malo, –a, bad, evil, wicked: hard, difficult; **¡—!** too bad! oh dear!
malquerencia, *f.*, animosity, malevolence, enmity, ill-will.
maltratado, –a, abused, mal treated.

maltrecho, -a, battered, in sorry plight.
malvado, -a, wicked, fiendish.
mamar, to suck; — **la misma leche,** to have the same rearing *or* bringing up.
manantial, *m.*, spring, source, fountain.
mancha, *f.*, blot, spot, stain.
mandar, to command, order; send.
mando, *m.*, command, control, charge.
manejar, to manage, control, direct.
manejo, *m.*, management, direction; intrigue.
manera, *f.*, manner, method, way; form, style; **á — de,** like, by way of.
manga, *f.*, sleeve.
manguito, *m.*, over-sleeve.
manifestar, to manifest, declare, state, say; show, make evident; reveal, evince.
maniobra, *f.*, manœuvre.
manjar, *m.*, food, provisions.
mano, *f.*, hand; **á —s,** into the possession of; **andar la —,** to have a hand in; **de —s,** from; **tener entre —s,** to have in hand.
manoseado, -a, handled, worn, thumbed.
manotear, to gesticulate.
mantener, to maintain, support, sustain, wage; keep, nourish; **—se,** to keep oneself, be, live; **—se firme,** to stand one's ground.
mantenga, *etc.*, *v.* **mantener.**
manto, *m.*, mantle, cloak, robe; cover.
mantuvo, *etc.*, *v.* **mantener.**
Manuel, *m.*, Emmanuel.
manzana, *f.*, apple.
mañana, *f.*, morning, forenoon; *adv.*, tomorrow; **hasta —,** until tomorrow; **por la —,** in the morning.
maquinación, *f.*, scheme, plot.
mar, *m. or f.*, sea; — **de fondo,** deep swell.
maragato, *m.*, *v. p. 15, n. 2.*
maravilla, *f.*, wonder, marvel.
marco, *m.*, frame.
marcha, *f.*, march, progress, course.
marchar, to march, go, go off, walk, run, proceed.
marea, *f.*, tide; catch.
mareante, *m.*, sailor, able seaman.
marear, to nauseate, make seasick.
marejada, *f.*, swell, surf, surge.
marfil, *f.*, ivory.
marido, *m.*, husband.
marinería, *f.*, seamen, ships' crews.
marinero, *m.*, mariner, sailor, seaman.
marino, *m.*, seaman, sailor; *pl.*, seafaring folk.
marítimo, -a, maritime, marine.
marqués, *m.*, marquis.
mártir, *m. & f.*, martyr, victim.
mas, *conj.*, but, yet.
más, *adv.*, more, besides, plus, further; most; — **allá,** further on; — **bien,** rather; — **de,** more than (*before numerals*); — **que,** but, except, rather than; **no . . . más,** no other; *v. p. 19, n. 1; p. 24, n. 4;* **no . . . más que,** no other . . . than; nothing *or* none but, only.
masa, *f.*, mass, crowd.
mástil, *m.*, mast.
matar, to kill, slay.
materia, *f.*, matter, subject, topic; **entrar en —,** to open, lead up to, a subject.
material,—, rude, matter-of-fact.
matizado, -a, shaded, tinted, blended.

matraca, *f.*, ridicule, derision, scorn, sarcasm.
matrimonio, *m.*, matrimony, marriage.
máxime, especially.
máximo, -a, highest, extreme, intensest.
mayor, larger, greater; older; main, principal; particular, especial; *m. pl.*, ancestors, forefathers, superiors.
mayorazgo, *m.*, family estate (devolving on firstborn son by right of primogeniture).
mayoría, *f.*, majority, greater number.
mecer, to rock, sway.
mecido, -a, soothed, lulled.
media, *f.*, stocking.
mediante, by means of; interceding; **Dios —**, God willing.
medicina, *f.*, medicine, remedy.
Médicis, Medici.
médico, *m.*, physician, doctor.
medida, *f.*, measure, proportion; **á — que**, at the same time that, according as, in proportion as.
medio, -a, half, middle; **— noche**, midnight.
medio, *m.*, middle, a half; expedient, method, way, means; **en — de**, in the midst of, midway between.
medir, to measure, weigh, gage, judge.
meditación, *f.*, meditation, musing, reflection.
meditar (en), to meditate, muse, wonder.
medroso, -a, terrifying, fearful; afraid, terrified; faint-hearted, cowardly, timid.
Méjico, Mexico.
mejilla, *f.*, cheek.
mejor, better; **por — decir**, rather.
mejorar (de), to make better, improve.
mejoría, *f.*, betterment, improvement.
melancolía, *f.*, melancholy, sadness.
melancólico, -a, melancholy, mournful, sad.
melena, *f.*, mane.
melífluo, -a, honeyed.
mención, *f.*, mention, reference.
menester, *m.*, need, necessity; **ser —**, to be necessary.
mengano, *m.*, So-and-So, Such-a-One.
menos, less, not quite, least; **por lo —**, at least; *v. p. 64, n. 2.*
ménos, except.
menoscabar, to lessen, diminish, impair.
mentar, to mention, name.
mente, *f.*, mind.
mentecato, -a, foolish, silly, crack-brained.
mentir, to lie.
mentira, *f.*, falsehood, story, lie.
menudear, to be repeated; grow (more) frequent, occur often(-er).
menudo, -a, little, small, slender, slight; **á —**, often, frequently, again and again.
mercado, *m.*, market.
merced, *f.*, thanks.
Mercurio, *m.*, Mercury.
merecer, to merit, deserve.
meridional, southern.
mérito, *m.*, merit, virtue, excellence.
merluza, *f.*, cod, hake.
mermar, to diminish, reduce, consume, waste.
mes, *m.*, month.
mesar, to tear (hair).
meseta, *f.*, plateau, table-land.
metafísica, *f.*, metaphysics.
metamorfosear, to transform.
meter, to put, place, thrust, stick, put in, bring in, inclose, shut in; **—se**, to put in, get

in, put into (port); put on (clothes); shut oneself up; meddle.
mezclar, to mix, mingle, unite; **—se,** to mix.
miedo, *m.*, fear, terror, fright, dread, apprehension; **tener — á,** to be afraid of.
miedoso, -a, fearful, timid, apprehensive.
miembro, *m.*, member.
mientes, *etc.*, *v.* **mentir.**
mientras, while, whilst, when; **— que,** while; *v. p. 8, n. 9.*
miércoles, *m.*, Wednesday.
migaja, *f.*, crumb, bit, fragment.
mil, (one) thousand.
milagro, *m.*, miracle, wonder.
milagroso, -a, miraculous, wonder-working.
milla, *f.*, mile.
millón, *m.*, million.
mina, *f.*, mine.
mínimo, -a, slightest, least, smallest.
ministro, *m.*, minister, officer.
mintiendo, *etc.*, *v.* **mentir.**
minuto, *m.*, minute, moment; **á los pocos —s,** *v. p. 36, n. 2.*
mirada, *f.*, look, glance, gaze.
mirar, mirar á, to look, look at, watch, observe.
misa, *f.*, mass.
miserablemente, miserably, wretchedly.
miseria, *f.*, misery, wretchedness, want, poverty.
misericordia, *f.*, mercy, pity, compassion.
mismo, -a, -os, -as, himself, herself, itself, yourself, *etc.;* same, self, very, own; **lo —,** the same; **lo — que,** just like, the same as, as well as, both . . . and.
misterio, *m.*, mystery, secret, secrecy.
misterioso, -a, mysterious, dark, [secret.
mitigar, to mitigate, alleviate, soften, soothe.
mixto, *m.*, mixed number.
mobiliario, *m.*, furnishing, furniture.
modesto, -a, modest, unassuming, unpretentious.
modificar, to modify, alter, change.
modo, *m.*, manner, means, way, method, style; **á — de,** like, by way of; **de mal —,** inconveniently, irregularly; **de ningún —,** under no circumstances; **de todos —s,** anyway, in any case.
mofarse (de), to mock, make fun of, ridicule.
mohino, -a, sulky, peevish, cross.
mojar, to moisten, wet, drench; **—se,** to get wet.
mojicón, *m.*, blow, slap, box on the ear.
molestar, to trouble, bother, disturb, inconvenience; **—se (en),** to trouble oneself (about).
momentáneo, -a, momentary, brief.
momento, *m.*, moment, instant; **por —s,** every moment; **por el —,** at the time.
moneda, *f.*, money, coin.
monosílabo, *m.*, monosyllable.
monótono, -a, monotonous, dull, wearisome.
montaña, *f.*, mountain, mountains.
montar, to mount, climb, get on top of.
monte, *m.*, mountain, mount.
montón, *m.*, pile, heap, mass.
morir, to die, perish; **—se,** to die, be dying.
mortal, *m.*, **—,** human being, person.
mortificar, to mortify, humiliate, vex.

mosca, *f.*, fly.
mostrador, *m.*, counter.
mostrar, to show, exhibit, display; prove; **—se,** to appear, show *or* prove oneself, seem, be.
motivo, *m.*, motive, cause, reason.
mover (á), to move, impel, induce, inspire.
movilidad, *f.*, mobility, sensitiveness.
movimiento, *m.*, movement, motion, action; gesture; impulse.
mozo, -a, young, youthful.
mozo, *m.*, youth, lad.
muchacha, *f.*, girl.
muchacho, *m.*, boy, lad.
muchedumbre, *f.*, multitude, crowd, mob.
mucho, -a, -os, -as, much, plenty, great; an abundance, many; **antes . . . con mucho,** *v. p. 13, n. 2;* **lo —,** how much; **ni — menos,** *v. p. 64, n. 2;* **por — que,** however much, no matter how much, *v. p. 24, n. 4.*
mudar, to change, vary, alter.
mudo, -a, mute, dumb, silent.
mueble, *m.*, piece of furniture; *pl.* furniture.
mueca, *f.*, face, grimace.
muelle, *m.*, wharf, quay, pier.
muere, *etc.*, *v.* **morir.**
muerte, *f.*, death; **dar —,** to kill.
muerto, -a, *p.p.* **morir.**
muestre, *etc.*, *v.* **mostrar.**
mueve, *etc.*, *v.* **mover.**
muil, *m.*, mullet.
mujer, *f.*, woman, wife.
mujeruca, *f.*, *v. p. 14, n. 1.*
múltiple, numerous, manifold.
mundo, *m.*, world, earth, globe; **todo el —,** everybody.
muralla, *f.*, wall, rampart.
murciélago, *m.*, bat.
murió, *etc.*, *v.* **morir.**
murmullo, *m.*, murmur, whisper, ripple.
murmuración, *f.*, dissatisfaction, complaint, discontent; talk, gossip, slander.
murmurar (de), to murmur, whisper; mutter, grumble, complain; ripple, rustle.
mutuamente, mutually.
mutuo, -a, reciprocal, mutual.
muy, very, greatly, most; **— más,** much more.

N

N, **norte,** *v.* **nordeste.**
nácar, *m.*, mother of pearl.
nacer, to be born, spring.
nada, nothing, anything; *adv.*, not, not at all, by no means.
naranja, *f.*, orange.
nariz, *f.*, nose, nostril.
narrar, to narrate, relate, tell.
natal, native.
nativo, -a, native, natural.
natural, —, usual, ordinary.
natural, *m.*, native; nature, disposition, temper.
naturaleza, *f.*, nature.
náufrago, -a, *m. & f.*, shipwrecked person.
nauseabundo, -a, nauseating, sickening, disgusting.
navaja, *f.*, razor, knife.
navegar, to navigate, sail.
necesario, -a, necessary, needful. [need.
necesidad, *f.*, necessity, want,
necesitado, -a, poor, needy, in need; obliged, compelled; **— de fondos,** "hard up."
necesitar (de), to need, lack, want; constrain, compel; be obliged to, must.
negación, *f.*, denial.
negar, to deny; **—se (á),** to decline, refuse.

negocio, *m.*, business, affair.
negro, -a, black, dark; gloomy, dismal.
negrura, *f.*, blackness.
nervioso, -a, nervous, strong, vigorous.
ni, nor, neither; not, even, not even; **ni . . . ni,** neither . . . nor.
Nicolás, *m.*, Nicholas.
niegues, *etc.*, *v.* **negar.**
nieto, *m.*, grandchild, grandson.
ningún, -o, -a, -os, -as, none, not any, not one; nobody; **de — modo,** under no circumstances.
niña, *f.*, (little) girl; **desde —s,** from childhood.
niñez, *f.*, infancy, childhood.
niño, *m.*, child, boy, youngster, lad; *pl. m.*, children.
no, —, not.
nobiliario, -a, nobiliary, aristocratic.
noble, —, generous.
noblemente, nobly, magnanimously.
nobleza, *f.*, nobility, gentility.
noción, *f.*, notion, idea, conception.
noche, *f.*, night; **al cerrar la —,** at nightfall; **buenas —s,** good-night, good-evening; **de —,** at night; **media —,** midnight; **por la —,** at night.
nodriza, *f.*, nurse.
nombre, *f.*, name.
nordeste, N. E., *m.*, northeast.
noroeste, *m.*, northwest.
notable, noticeable, conspicuous, important.
notablemente, remarkably, exceedingly, noticeably.
notar, to notice, note, observe, mark.
noticia, *f.*, news, tidings; notice, information, knowledge; **tener —,** to hear about.
noticiar, to inform, notify, communicate.
noticioso, -a, informed, made aware.
notificar, to notify, announce, inform.
novela, *f.*, novel, romance, story, tale.
novia, *f.*, sweetheart, betrothed.
noviembre, November.
novio, *m.*, sweetheart, (affianced) lover, suitor; **de —,** as a lover, courting, wooing.
nubarrón, *m.*, heavy, threatening cloud.
nube, *f.*, cloud.
nueva, *f.*, tidings, news.
nuevamente, again, once more, afresh, newly, recently.
nueve, nine.
nuevo, -a, new, fresh; **de —,** anew, once more, afresh; **¿ Qué hay de — ?** What news?
número, *m.*, number; **sin —,** numberless, innumerable.
nunca, never, at no time; ever; **como —,** as never before.

O

ó, or; **ó . . . ó,** either . . . or.
obedecer (á), to obey.
obediencia, *f.*, obedience, submission.
obispo, *m.*, bishop.
objetar, to object, oppose.
objeto, *m.*, object, purpose, design, aim.
obligación, *f.*, obligation, duty.
obligar (á), to oblige, compel, constrain.
obra, *f.*, work, toil; volume; *v. p. 11, n. 5.*
obrar, to work, act; perform.
observación, *f.*, observation, remark.
observar, to observe, notice,

watch, examine, scrutinize; follow, lead (a life).
obstáculo, *m.*, obstacle, impediment, difficulty.
obstante, no —, notwithstanding.
obtener, to obtain, procure.
obtienen, *etc.*, *v.* **obtener.**
ocasión, *f.*, occasion, opportunity, chance.
ocasionar, to occasion, cause, produce.
océano, *m.*, ocean.
octubre, *m.*, October.
ocultar, to hide, conceal, secrete.
oculto, -a, hidden, concealed.
ocupación, *f.*, occupation, employment, business.
ocupar, to occupy, fill; **—se (en)**, to busy *or* employ oneself in; engage in, attend to.
ocurrir, to occur, take place, happen; strike; **—se**, to occur.
ochenta, eighty.
ocho, eight; **— días**, a week.
odiar, to hate, detest.
odio, *m.*, hatred, ill-will, animosity.
oeste, *m.*, west.
ofender, to offend, hurt, insult, annoy; **—se**, to be provoked, take offense.
ofendido, -a, displeased, angry; injured.
oferta, *f.*, offer, promise.
oficiar, to officiate, celebrate (mass).
oficio, *m.*, employment, work, occupation, trade; service, office, mass.
ofrecer, to offer, promise, present, exhibit, show; **—se**, to offer, occur, present itself.
ofrenda, *f.*, offering, gift.
ofuscar, to darken, obscure, confuse.
oído, *m.*, hearing, ear; **al —**, in *the ear of.*
oiga, *etc.*, *v.* **oír**; **¡—!** see here!
oír, to hear, listen.
ojalá, may God grant! would that!
ojeada, *f.*, glance, look.
ojeriza, *f.*, grudge, spite, aversion.
ojo, *m.*, eye; **con buenos —s**, favorably, with interest; **—s de lince**, sharp, keen, observant eyes.
ola, *f.*, wave, breaker, billow.
oleada, *f.*, great wave, surge.
oler, to smell, scent.
olímpico, -a, Olympic.
olor, *m.*, odor, smell, scent, stench.
olvidarse (de), to forget.
olvido, *m.*, oblivion, forgetfulness.
ominoso, -a, ominous, unfortunate.
omnipotente, omnipotent, almighty.
once, eleven.
operación, *f.*, operation, process, act.
operarse, to operate; be occasioned, ensue.
opinión, *f.*, —, judgment, idea; reputation.
oponer, to oppose; **—se (á)**, to make objection, set oneself against.
oportunamente, opportunely, conveniently, seasonably.
oportunidad, *f.*, opportunity; **con —**, opportunely, readily.
oportuno, -a, timely, convenient.
oposición, *f.*, opposition, resistance, antagonism.
oprimir, to oppress, weigh down, crush.
optar, to choose; determine.
oración, *f.*, prayer.
orador, *m.*, orator.
orden, *m.*, order, kind, class; *f.*, order, command.

ordenar, to order, command.
ordinariamente, customarily, usually, as a rule.
ordinario, -a, ordinary, usual, common; **de —,** usual.
oreja, *f.*, (outer) ear.
orgullo, *m.*, pride, haughtiness, conceit.
orgullosamente, proudly.
origen, *m.*, origin, family, extraction.
originarse, to originate, arise, spring.
orilla, *f.*, shore, edge, border; **á —s,** on the shore.
oro, *m.*, gold, money.
orzar, to luff.
osar, to dare, venture.
oscuramente, indistinctly, confusedly, unintelligibly.
oscurecer, to grow dark, dim *or* obscure; darken; **—se,** to cloud over.
oscurezca, *etc.*, *v.* **oscurecer.**
oscuridad, *f.*, darkness, gloom.
oscuro, -a, dark, sombre; **á —as,** in darkness.
ostra, *f.*, oyster.
otear, to observe, view; command (a view).
otoño, *m.*, autumn.
otorgar, to grant, give, consent *or* agree to.
oye, *etc.*, *v.* **oír.**
¡oyes! see here! I say!

P

paciencia, *f.*, patience.
pacientemente, patiently, perseveringly.
pacífico, -a, pacific, mild, gentle, peaceful, peaceable.
pacotilla, *f.*, venture.
padecer, to suffer, grieve.
padrastro, *m.*, step-father.
padre, *m.*, father; *pl.*, parents.
padrenuestro, *m.*, Our Father, Lord's Prayer.
pagar, to pay, repay, reward, requite.
país, *m.*, country, land, region.
palabra, *f.*, word; promise, offer; **de —,** by word of mouth.
palabrita, *f.*, *dim.* **palabra.**
palestra, *f.*, wrestling-court, arena.
palacio, *m.*, palace, castle.
pálido, -a, pale, white.
palmadita, *f.*, little pat, slap.
palmeta, *f.*, blow with ferule; caning.
palmetazo, *m.*, *aug.* **palmeta;** great blow, whack.
palo, *m.*, stick, club; pole, mast.
palomita, *f.*, little dove; bird; darling.
pan, *m.*, bread, food, living.
panadera, *f.*, baker, baker's wife.
pandilla, *f.*, party, group, crowd.
pánico, *m.*, fright, panic.
pantalla, *f.*, shade, screen.
panza, *f.*, belly, paunch.
paño, *m.*, cloth, stuff, material.
pañuelo, *m.*, handkerchief, kerchief.
papel, *m.*, paper; rôle, figure; **jugar —,** to play a part.
paquete, *m.*, package, parcel.
paquetito, *m.*, *dim.* **paquete.**
par, *m.*, pair, couple.
para, for, to, in order to, until, toward; **— que** (+ *subj.*), in order that, so that; **— qué,** why? for what reason, purpose?
paradero, *m.*, whereabouts.
parado, -a, idle, unused; suspended, at a standstill, discontinued.
paraje, *m.*, spot, place.
paralelo, -a, parallel.
paralizar, to paralyze, benumb.
parangón, *m.*, comparison.
parar, to stop; lodge; come to

the possession of, devolve; **—se (á)**, to stop, pause.
parecer, *m.*, opinion, view, notion, idea.
parecer, to appear, seem, turn up; **al —,** apparently.
parecido, -a, resembling, like, similar.
pared, *f.*, wall.
pareja, *f.*, match, mate.
parezca, *etc.*, *v.* **parecer.**
parias, *f.*, tribute; **rendir —,** pay homage.
pariente, *m.* & *f.*, relative, kinsman.
parroquia, *f.*, parish; parish church.
parte, *f.*, part, portion, number, measure, share; place, spot; cause, reason; **— de Levante,** east; **la mayor —,** the majority, most; **por ninguna —,** anywhere, nowhere; **por otra —,** on the other hand; **por — de,** on the part of, from; **de la — de fuera,** outside.
participar, to participate, share.
particular, peculiar, special, odd; *m.*, particular individual, private gentleman; **en —,** specially.
particularmente, particularly, especially.
partida, *f.*, departure.
partido, *m.*, match, mate; **tomar el —,** to decide.
partir, to depart, leave, start; part, cut, divide; **— (en),** to share, do with; **á — de,** from.
pasar, to pass (by), go by *or* through, pass away; happen, turn out, befall; **—se,** to pass, be passing; **— por,** to be considered as, have reputation of; **—le (á uno) el susto,** recover from fright.
pasear, to turn *or* give (a look); **—se,** to walk, promenade; ***salir paseando,*** go for a walk.
paseo, *m.*, walk, ramble; **de —,** out walking.
pasión, *f.*, passion, love.
pasmado, -a, amazed, astonished, stupefied.
paso, *m.*, step, pace; way, passage, pass; passing; plight; **mal —,** difficult situation; **dar —s,** take steps; **dirigir los —s,** to walk (towards).
patata, *f.*, potato.
paterno, -a, paternal, fatherly.
patio, *m.*, yard, court.
patrón, *m.*, skipper, captain, master.
pausa, *f.*, pause, stop, rest; deliberation, care.
pavimiento, *m.*, floor, pavement.
pavor, *m.*, fear, terror, panic.
pavoroso, -a, terrible, frightful.
paz, *f.*, peace, rest, quiet; **¡—!** hush!
pebetero, *m.*, censer.
pecado, *m.*, sin, guilt.
pecho, *m.*, bosom, breast, chest; **clavado al —,** in a close embrace.
pedagogo, *m.*, pedagogue, teacher.
pedazo, *m.*, piece, bit, fragment.
pedestal, *m.*, —, support.
pedir (*pers. indir. obj.*), to beg, ask, demand, request.
Pedro, *m.*, Peter.
pedrusco, *m.*, piece of rough stone.
pegado, -a, attached, stuck, clinging.
pegajoso, -a, sticky, close, clammy.
pegar, to hit, strike, slap, whip, beat; give (a blow); stick.
pegote, *m.*, parasite, toady.
peldaño, *m.*, step.
pelea, *f.*, fight, quarrel, dispute, struggle.
peligro, *m.*, peril, danger, risk.
peligroso, -a, perilous, dangerous.

pelo, *m.*, hair.
pellejo, *m.*, skin.
pena, *f.*, pain, anxiety, sorrow; penalty, punishment; trouble, difficulty; hardship, toil; **á duras —s,** with great difficulty, hardly, scarcely.
penado, *m.*, culprit, convict.
pendejo, -a, *m. & f.*, coward, poltroon; wretch.
pendencia, *f.*, quarrel, dispute.
pendenciero, -a, quarrelsome.
pender, to depend, hang.
pendiente, hanging, clinging; steep.
pendiente, *m.*, ear-ring.
penetrante, penetrating, insistent, piercing.
penetrar, to penetrate, pierce.
penitencia, *f.*, repentance, penance.
penosamente, painfully.
penoso, -a, painful, arduous, laborious.
pensamiento, *m.*, thought, idea, [mind.
pensar (en), to think (of *or* about), consider, intend.
pensativo, -a, pensive, thoughtful.
peña, *f.*, rock, cliff.
peñasco, *m.*, large rock.
peonza, *f.*, top.
peor, worse, worst; **lo —,** the worst.
Pepa, *f.*, Josie.
Pepe, *m.*, Joe.
pequeño, -a, small, little.
pequeñuelo, -a, *m. & f.*, little one.
percibir, to perceive, detect, feel; receive, collect.
perder, to lose; ruin; **— de vista,** lose sight of; **—se,** to be lost, go astray.
pérdida, *f.*, loss.
perdido, *m.*, dissolute, profligate person; rake.
perdón, *m.*, pardon, forgiveness.
perdonar, to pardon, forgive, excuse, exempt.
perecer, to perish, die, be destroyed.
perentorio, -a, peremptory, positive, authoritative.
perezosamente, idly, lazily.
perfectamente, perfectly; all right, very well, exactly.
perilla, *f.*, goatee, imperial.
período, *m.*, period, epoch, age, time.
peripecia, *f.*, incident, event, adventure, vicissitude.
permanecer, *etc.*, to remain, stay.
permanezca, *etc.*, *v.* **permanecer.**
permiso, *m.*, permission, leave.
permitir, to permit, let, allow, enable.
pernada, *v. p. 96, n. 4.*
pero, but, yet.
perplejo, -a, perplexed, uncertain, puzzled.
perra, *f.*, bitch; slut.
perro, *m.*, dog.
perseguir, to pursue; persecute, harass, dun.
persigue, *etc.*, *v.* **perseguir.**
persistir, to persist, persevere.
persona, *f.*, person, individual; *pl.*, people, folk.
personaje, *m.*, personage, person of eminence.
personarse, to appear, present oneself, come in person.
perspectiva, *f.*, prospect, vista.
persuadirse (á), to be persuaded, convinced.
pertenecer, to belong to, concern.
perteneciente, belonging.
perverso, -a, perverse, wicked.
pesadamente, heavily, weightily.
pesado, -a, weighty, heavy, cumbersome.
pesadumbre, *f.*, heaviness, weightiness; sorrow, grief, trouble.

pesar, *m.*, sorrow, trouble; **á — de,** in spite of, notwithstanding; **á su —,** in spite of himself, *etc.*
pesar, to weigh; consider, ponder; grieve, cause regret *or* concern.
pesaroso, -a, chagrined; dejected, disconsolate, sorry.
pesca, *f.*, fishing, catch.
pescado, *m.*, fish.
pescador, -a, fishing (-).
pescador, *m.*, fisherman.
pescar, to fish (for), to catch.
pescuezo, *m.*, neck; nape of neck.
pesimista, *m.*, pessimist.
peso, *m.*, weight, burden.
pestañear, to wink; **sin —,** fixedly, steadily.
pestes, *f. pl.*, insults.
petición, *f.*, petition, claim, demand.
petrificado, -a, petrified.
pez, *m.*, fish (uncaptured).
picado, -a, aroused, rough, boisterous.
picardía, *f.*, rascality, trick.
pícaro, -a, knave, rascal.
pico, *m.*, peak, summit, top, sharp point.
pida, *etc.*, *v.* **pedir.**
pie, *m.*, foot; **en —,** standing.
piedad, *f.*, piety; mercy, pity, compassion.
piedra, *f.*, rock, stone.
piensas, *etc.*, *v.* **pensar.**
pierda, *etc.*, *v.* **perder.**
pierna, *f.*, leg.
pieza, *f.*, room; *v. p. 13, n. 5.*
piloto, *m.*, pilot, sailing-master.
pimentón, *m.*, red pepper (ground).
pinchar, to pierce, prick.
pingüe, fat, rich, plentiful.
pino, *m.*, pine
pintar, to picture, paint; represent, show.
pintoresco, -a, picturesque.
pipa, *f.*, cask, hogshead.
pique, ir á —, to founder, sink.
pisado, -a, trodden upon, stepped on, trampled.
piso, *m.*, floor, story.
placer, *m.*, pleasure, joy, satisfaction.
placer, to please, gratify, content.
plácido, -a, placid, peaceful, calm.
plan, *m.*, —, scheme, design.
planchado, -a, ironed, pressed.
planicie, *f.*, surface, expanse, level.
planta, *f.*, sole of the foot, foot.
plantar, to plant, place.
plata, *f.*, silver, money.
plática, *f.*, conversation, talk, chat.
playa, *f.*, beach, shore; bank, shoal.
plazo, *m.*, time, date.
plebe, *f.*, common people.
plebeyo, -a, plebeian.
plegar, to fold.
plegaria, *f.*, prayer.
pleno, -a, full, complete.
pliegue, *m.*, fold.
plomo, *m.*, lead.
pluma, *f.*, pen; **— de ave,** quill pen.
población, *f.*, population; town.
pobre, poor, needy; unhappy, wretched, miserable, pitiable.
pobrecilla, *f.*, poor, miserable thing; poor little thing, poor child.
pobrecito, -a, *m. & f.*, poor child.
pobrete, *m.*, poor, unfortunate fellow.
pobretón, -a, *m. & f.*, beggar, pauper.
pobreza, *f.*, poverty, need, indigence.
poco, -a, little, scanty, limited;

few, some; — **á** —, little by little, gradually; *v. p. 19, n. 1.*
poder, *m.*, power, possession, control; force, intensity; authority, command.
poder, to be able, can, may; have force, strength, power (to act); **no — menos de,** *v. p. 132, n. 2.*
poderío, *m.*, power, authority.
poderoso, -a, (á), powerful, potent; active, able.
podrá, *etc.*, *v.* **poder.**
podrido, -a, decaying, rotting, rotten.
poeta, *m.*, poet.
polvo, *m.*, powder.
pollino, *m.*, ass, donkey.
pomar, *m.*, apple-tree.
pomposo, -a, pompous, ostentatious, high-sounding.
pondría, *etc.*, *v.* **poner.**
poner, to put, place, set; dispose, arrange; contribute, offer; — **al descubierto,** to uncover, lay bare; — **cuidado en,** to take care; **—se,** to become, get, turn, grow; put on; **—se á,** to begin; **—se colorado,** to blush; — **en pie,** to get up, rise; *v. p. 8, n. 5; p. 52, n. 4.*
ponga, *etc.*, *v.* **poner.**
popa, *f.*, poop, stern.
poquito, -a, very little; **un — o,** a bit.
por, by; through, along, across; as, in, on, at, per, about, during; for, on account of, in behalf of, instead of, by means of; in order to (+ *inf. implying uncertain result*); — **detrás,** behind; — **dónde,** *v.* **donde;** — . . . **que,** however; — **más que,** *v. p. 24, n. 4;* — **si,** *v. p. 120, n. 2;* — **ventura,** perchance.
porción, *f.*, portion, number, lot.
pormenor, *m.*, detail, particular.
porque, because; so that, in order that; — **sí,** "because," because I will.
por qué, why? what . . . for?
porquería, *f.*, meanness, trick.
portal, *m.*, entrance, vestibule, porch.
portentoso, -a, astonishing, amazing.
pórtico, *m.*, porch, veranda, gallery.
porvenir, lo —, the future, time to come.
pos, en —, behind, after.
posada, inn, lodging(s).
poseer, to possess.
posible, feasible, practicable, possible.
posición, *f.*, position, standing.
postre, last, end; **á la —,** finally, in the end, at last; in turn.
postrero, -a, last.
potencia, *f.*, power, influence.
potentado, *m.*, potentate, prince, magnate.
práctico, *m.*, expert, experienced person; pilot.
pradera, *f.*, meadow, field.
precario, -a, precarious, uncertain; straitened.
precaución, *f.*, precaution, care.
preceder (á), to precede.
precio, *m.*, price, cost.
precipitación, *f.*, haste, hurry, precipitation.
precipitadamente, hastily, precipitately.
precipitarse (á), to hurry, rush forward.
precisamente, exactly, just then.
precisado, -a, (á), obliged, compelled.
precisión, *f.*, distinctness, exactness.
preciso, needful, necessary, requisite.
precursor, -a, preceding; *m.*, forerunner, herald, harbinger.

preferencia, *f.*, choice, preference.
preferente, preferred, preferable, taking precedence.
preferible, preferable.
pregón, *m.*, proclamation.
pregunta, *f.*, question, inquiry.
preguntar (á) (*pers. indir. obj.*), to ask, demand, inquire.
preliminar, preliminary.
prenda, *f.*, badge, sign, mark (of respectability).
prender, to seize, take hold of, catch; take root; take fire, kindle.
preocupar, to prepossess, engage; worry.
preparar, to prepare, arrange, make ready.
preparativo, *m.*, preparation.
presa, *f.*, prize, prey, booty, spoils.
presencia, *f.*, presence; bearing.
presenciar, to witness, be present at, attend.
presentar, to present, give, offer; **—se,** to appear, present oneself.
presente, present; *m. pl.*, **los —s,** those present, the company.
presentimiento, *m.*, presentiment, foreboding, misgiving.
presentir, to forebode, have a presentiment of.
preservar, to preserve, keep, guard.
presidente, *m.*, president.
presintiendo, *etc.*, *v.* **presentir.**
préstamo, *m.*, loan.
prestar, to lend; **—se,** to lend oneself, offer.
presteza, *f.*, speed, promptness, quickness, deftness.
prestigio, *m.*, prestige, distinction.
presto, -a, quick, prompt, ready; *adv.*, quickly, soon, speedily.
presumir, to presume, suppose, suspect.
presuroso, -a, quick, swift, prompt; hurried(ly).
pretender, to pretend; try, attempt.
pretestar, to pretend, feign.
pretexto, *m.*, pretext, pretense, cover; **con — de,** under pretense of.
prevenido, -a, forewarned, ready, prepared.
prevenir, to prearrange, provide.
prever, to foresee.
previno, *etc.*, *v.* **prevenir.**
prima, *f.*, cousin.
primavera, *f.*, spring.
primero, -a, first; early; **— que,** before.
primo, *m.*, cousin.
primorosamente, charmingly, delightfully, exquisitely.
primoroso, -a, charming, exquisite, graceful, neat.
principiar (á), to begin, start, commence.
principio, *m.*, beginning, start; **al —,** at first.
prisa, *f.*, haste, hurry, speed, promptness; **á toda —,** in the greatest hurry; **darse —,** to make haste, hurry; **de** *or* **con —,** hurriedly, quickly.
privado, -a, deprived, despoiled, dispossessed.
privativo, -a, individual, peculiar, exclusive.
privilegio, *m.*, privilege, prerogative, liberty.
proa, *f.*, prow, bow.
probar, to taste, prove, experience.
problema, *m.*, problem.
procacidad, *f.*, impudence, insolence.
proceder, to proceed.
prócer, *m.*, nobleman, grandee, peer.

procesar, to prosecute, accuse; sue.
procurar, to try, endeavor; procure, get, obtain.
prodigar, to lavish, regale.
prodigiosamente, prodigiously, wonderfully.
producir, to produce, cause, occasion.
produjo, *etc.*, *v.* **producir.**
proeza, *f.*, prowess, feat (of courage).
proferir, to express, utter, pronounce.
profiriendo, *etc.*, *v.* **proferir.**
profundamente, deeply, intensely, profoundly.
profundidad, *f.*, depth.
profundo, -a, profound, deep.
progreso, *m.*, progress, growth, advance.
prolongado, -a, prolonged, extending to.
promesa, *f.*, promise.
prometer, to promise, bid fair, give indication of.
prometida, *f.*, betrothed, sweetheart.
prontamente, soon, quickly, promptly.
pronto, -a, (á), quick, prompt, ready, hasty; *adv.*, soon, quickly, promptly; *v. p. 11, n. 3.*
pronunciar, to pronounce, say.
propalar, to spread, publish.
propicio -a, propitious, favorable.
propiedad, *f.*, property.
propinar, to prescribe.
propio, -a, -os, -as, own, same, self; himself, herself, *etc.;* proper, peculiar, characteristic, natural, worthy.
propio, *m.*, messenger.
proponer, to propose; **—se,** to plan, resolve, determine.
proporcionar, to supply, furnish, provide; yield, render.
propósito, *m.*, purpose, plan, design, intention.
prorrumpir, to break forth, burst out.
propuso, *v.* **proponer.**
proseguir, to proceed, continue, pursue, follow.
prosiguió, *v.* **proseguir.**
prosternarse, to prostrate oneself.
protección, *f.*, protection.
protector, -a, protecting.
proteger, to protect, guard, defend, cover.
proveer, to provide, furnish.
providencia, *f.*, providence.
provincia, *f.*, province.
próximamente, approximately, nearly.
próximo, -a, next, near, neighboring, close by.
proyecto, *m.*, project, design.
prudencia, *f.*, prudence.
prudente, prudent, discreet.
prueba, *f.*, proof, evidence, sign.
pudiendo, *etc.*, *v.* **poder.**
pueblecillo, *m.*, little town, village.
pueblo, *m.*, town, village; people.
pueda, *etc.*, *v.* **poder.**
puerco, -a, dirty, nasty, filthy.
puerco, -a, *m. & f.*, pig; sow.
puerta, *f.*, door.
puertecilla, *f.*, *dim.* **puerta.**
puerto, *m.*, port, harbor, haven.
pues, because, then, for, since; well, inasmuch as; **— bien,** very well; **— qué,** why not?
puesto, *p.p.* **poner;** placed, put, set; **— que,** since, although.
pulido, -a, shining, polished; neat, nice, fine.
pulpo, *m.*, cuttle-fish.
pundonoroso, -a, honorable, punctilious.
punta, *f.*, point, end, extremity, tip; cape, headland, promontory.

puntiagudo, -a, sharp-pointed.
puntito, *m., dim.* **punto.**
punto, *m.,* point, dot; instant, moment; opportunity; matter, subject; **á — de,** on the point of, about to; **á — fijo,** exactly; **al —,** at once, immediately; **de todo —,** quite, wholly, completely; **en — á,** in point of, as regards.
puntual, punctual, prompt, exact.
puñado, *m.,* handful, a few.
puño, *m.,* fist; head, knob (of staff).
puramente, purely, entirely.
pureza, *f.,* purity, clearness.
pusiera, *etc., v.* **poner.**

Q

que, who, (whom), which, that; **el, la, lo, los, las —,** he, she, they, those who, the one who, that which; *interrog.* what? how? which? *exclam.* how! what! what a! *conj.* that, for; *compar.* than, as; **de lo —,** than; **á —,** until; **de —,** that; **¿ y — ?** and what of it? **es —,** the fact is.
quebrado, *m.,* fraction.
quebrar, to break, burst, snap.
quedar, to stop, stay, remain, continue; have left; **—se,** to remain, be.
quedo, -a, quiet, calm.
quehacer, *m.,* duty, occupation, business, *v. p. 45, n. 4.*
queja, *f.,* complaint.
quejarse, to complain, grumble, resent, regret, dispute.
quemar, to burn, scorch, scald.
querer, to wish, want, desire, will; **— á,** to love, care for, like; **— decir,** to mean.
querido, -a, dear, beloved.
querrás, *etc., v.* **querer.**
queso, *m.,* cheese.
quicio, *m.,* side-post, jamb (of a door).
quiera, *etc., v.* **querer.**
quieto, -a, silent, still, quiet.
quilla, *f.,* keel.
quimera, *f.,* chimera, foolish, wild fancy.
quince, fifteen; **— días,** a fortnight.
quinta, *f.,* country place, country house, villa.
quiñon, *m.,* share (of profit).
quisiera, *etc., v.* **querer.**
quisto, -a, *p.p.* **querer; bien —,** well liked.
quitar (*pers. indir. obj.*), to take away, rob; forbid; **—se,** to remove, take off; **nos quita la vista,** prevents our seeing.
quizá, quizás, perhaps, possibly.

R

raba, *f.,* codfish-roe.
rabia, *f.,* rage, fury.
rabillo, *m., v. p. 42, n. 3.*
rabioso, -a, mad, frantic, furious.
Rafael, *m.,* Raphael.
ráfaga, *f.,* gust.
raído, -a, ragged, worn, threadbare, frayed.
raíz, *f.,* root; **echar raíces,** to take root.
rajar, to split, rend, tear.
rama, *f.,* branch, limb, bough.
ramalazo, *m.,* gust, lash, crack.
ramillete, *m.,* bouquet, nosegay.
Ramón, *m.,* Raymond.
rango, *m.,* rank, dignity.
rapaz, rapacious, hungry, ravenous, greedy, voracious.
rapaz, *m.,* ship's boy, cabin-boy.
rápidamente, rapidly, quickly.
rápido, -a, quick, swift.

raro, -a, rare, unusual, uncommon; queer, odd, strange; **—a vez,** rarely.
rasado, -a, filled, overflowing, brimmed (w. tears).
rasgado, -a, *v. p. 4, n. 6.*
rastro, *m.*, trace, vestige.
ratificarse (en), to ratify, confirm.
rato, *m.*, time, while, moment; **á —s,** at times, occasionally; **al poco —,** within a short while; **hace —,** a while ago.
ratón, *m.*, mouse.
raya, *f.*, line, bar, stripe.
rayar (en), to verge, border upon.
rayo, *m.*, ray, beam.
razón, *f.*, reason, cause, motive; right; **tener —,** to be right.
razonamiento, *m.*, reasoning, discussion, argument.
real, royal; **camino —,** highway, high road.
realidad, *f.*, reality, truth, fact.
realizar, to realize, accomplish, perform.
realmente, really, truly.
reanimado, -a, reanimated, revived, enlivened, stirred up.
rebaja, *f.*, rebate, reduction.
rebelarse, to rebel.
rebelde, rebellious, unmanageable.
rebeldía, *f.*, rebellion, disobedience.
rebelión, *f.*, rebellion, resistance.
rebosar, to overflow, run *or* bubble over.
recado, *m.*, message.
recaer, to go back to, fall back upon.
recelo, *m.*, suspicion, apprehension, dread.
receloso, -a, suspicious, distrustful, fearful, jealous.
reciamente, stoutly, strongly, forcibly; violently.
recibir, to receive, accept, take; welcome.
reciente, recent, modern.
recinto, *m.*, place, room, precinct.
recio, -a, strong, vigorous, severe, swift, violent.
reclamación, *f.*, objection, complaint, remonstrance.
reclamar (*pers. indir. obj.*), to claim, demand, reclaim.
recobrar, to recover, regain.
recoger, to pick up, gather, get, collect; take in, shelter.
recomendar, to charge, recommend.
recomienden, *etc.*, *v.* **recomendar.**
recondenado, -a, confounded, cursed.
reconocer, to recognize; acknowledge, own; examine, reconnoitre.
recordar, to remind, recall; **—se de),** to remember, recall.
recorrer, to run *or* read over, examine; traverse, cross, go through; scour, range.
recriminación, *f.*, blame, accusation.
recriminar, to reprove, accuse.
recto, -a, right, straight.
recuerdo, *m.*, memory, remembrance.
recurso, *m.*, recourse, resort; *pl.*, resources, means.
rechazar, to reject, refuse.
rechinar, to creak, grate.
red, *f.*, net.
redimir, to redeem, rescue, relieve.
redoblar, to redouble.
redondo, -a, round; **en —,** all around, round and round.
reducir, to reduce, lessen, convert.
referente, relating, regarding.
referir, to refer; relate, tell; **—se,** to have reference to.
refinado, -a, refined, perfect.

refinamiento, *m.*, refinement, nicety, elegance.
reflejar, to reflect; **—se,** to be reflected.
reflexión, *f.*, thought, consideration.
reflexivamente, thoughtfully, meditatively.
reflexivo, -a, thoughtful, reserved.
refrenar, to restrain, control, check.
refrescar, to freshen, grow cool.
refugiarse, to take refuge, shelter oneself.
regalar, to make a present of; regale, treat; feast.
regalo, *m.*, present, gift.
región, *f.*, region, quarter, space.
registrar, to inspect, examine, investigate.
regla, *f.*, rule, law; **en —,** in order.
regocijo, *m.*, joy, delight, exultation.
regresar, to return, go back.
reinar, to reign, rule; prevail.
reír(se), to laugh, smile; **—se (de),** to laugh at, make fun of.
reja, *f.*, bar, grating.
relación, *f.*, relation, narrative, account; *pl.*, relations, intercourse.
relámpago, *m.*, lightning flash.
religión, *f.*, — ; faith.
religioso, -a, religious, pious, devout, spiritual.
relingar, to rope (a sail), clew.
reloj, *m.*, watch.
reluciente, shining, luminous, brilliant.
remangar, to roll up, tuck up, pick up; bare the arms (by rolling up sleeves).
rematado, -a, crazy; **loco —,** stark mad.
remedar, to imitate, follow the example of.
remediar, to remedy, help, avoid.
remedio, *m.*, remedy, help, resource, recourse.
remendar, to mend, patch, darn.
remitir, to remit, send.
remo, *m.*, oar.
remolino, *m.*, whirlwind.
remordimiento, *m.*, remorse, regret.
remoto, -a, remote, far away, distant.
renacer, to spring up *or* be born again.
rencor, *m.*, ill-will, animosity.
rendido, -a, weary, worn out, overcome (with fatigue).
rendir, to render; **—se,** to yield, submit, surrender.
renovar, to renew, change, replace.
renta, *f.*, rent, income, revenue.
reñido, -a, at enmity, put out, angry.
reñidor, -a, *m.* & *f.*, scold, wrangler.
reñir, to quarrel, dispute, wrangle.
reo, *m.*, criminal, offender, wrongdoer.
reparar, to observe, notice, consider, reflect, give heed.
repartir, to divide, share, distribute.
reparto, *m.*, division, apportionment.
repentinamente, suddenly.
repentino, -a, sudden, abrupt, unexpected.
repetido, -a, repeated, renewed.
repetir, to repeat, reiterate.
repitieron, *etc.*, *v.* **repetir.**
réplica, *f.*, reply, answer.
replicar, to answer.
reponer, to reply; replace, restore.
reposar, to rest, repose.
reposo, *m.*, repose, rest, peace.
reprender (*pers. indir. obj.*), to reprove, scold, chide.

representante, *m.*, representative.
representar, to represent, show, make clear.
reprimir, to repress, restrain, control.
reprobar, to reprove, reproach, blame.
repuesto, **-a**, *p.p.* **reponer**, restored, recovered.
repugnante, repulsive, offensive.
repugnar, to repel, disgust.
repuso, *etc.*, *v.* **reponer**.
reputado, **-a**, **(por)**, reputed, well-known (as).
requemado, **-a**, tanned, sunburned.
requisito, *m.*, requisite, requirement, condition.
resaca, *f.*, surf, undertow.
resarcir, to compensate, refund, make good.
resbalar, to slip.
resentirse, to give way, fall ill, suffer harm.
reserva, *f.*, reserve, secrecy, discretion; **de —**, extra, spare.
reservadamente, privately.
residuo, *m.*, remains, remainder.
resignación, *f.*, resignation, patience.
resignar, to resign, give up; **—se**, to submit.
resistencia, *f.*, opposition.
resistir (á), resist, endure.
resolución, *f.*, determination, boldness, assurance, decision; solution, conclusion, ending.
resolver, to resolve, determine, make up one's mind.
respaldado, **-a**, leaning back.
respecto, *m.*, regard, relation; **— á**, concerning, with regard to.
respetable, considerable.
respetar, to respect, regard.
respeto, *m.*, respect, consideration, esteem.
respiración, *f.*, breath, breathing.
respirar, to take breath, "breathe freely."
respiro, *m.*, respite, breathing space.
resplandecer, to shine, gleam, burn, glow.
resplandor, *m.*, splendor, radiance, brightness.
responder, to respond, reply, answer.
responsable, answerable, accountable.
respuesta, *f.*, reply, answer.
restañar, to staunch, stop flow of blood.
restar, to remain.
resto, *m.*, rest, remainder.
restregar, to rub.
resueltamente, resolutely, firmly.
resuelto, **-a**, *p.p.* **resolver**; resolved, determined, decided; **— á todo**, ready for anything, everything.
resultado, *m.*, result; **en último —**, *v. p. 41, n. 3.*
resultar, to result, follow, turn out.
retama, *f.*, broom, furze.
retirado, **-a**, retired, pensioned.
retirar, to reject, abandon; **—se**, to withdraw, retire, retreat.
retorcer, to twist, wring, distort, roll.
retórica, *f.*, rhetoric.
retrato, *m.*, portrait, picture.
retroceder, to retreat, go back.
retuerzo, *etc.*, *v.* **retorcer**.
retumbar, to resound, re-echo, reverberate.
reunido, **-a**, assembled, united, gathered together.
reunir, to join, foregather; **—se**, to gather, assemble.
revelación, *f.*, revelation, disclosure.

revés, *m.*, reverse.
revestido, vested, in full vestments.
revolución, *f.*, revolution, disturbance, commotion, change.
revolver, to revolve, upturn, turn over; stir, shake, stir up; disturb; return; **—se**, to move to and fro, dash, whirl.
revuelta, *f.*, winding.
revuelto, **-a**, *p.p.* **revolver**; irregular, winding.
reyerta, *f.*, quarrel, fight, dispute.
rezar, to pray.
ribera, *f.*, beach, shore.
rico, **-a**, rich, wealthy; delicate, delicious.
ridículo, **-a**, ridiculous, comical, absurd; queer.
ríe, *etc.*, *v.* **reír**.
riente, smiling, radiant.
riesgo, *m.*, risk, danger, peril.
rigidez, *f.*, inflexibility, sternness, severity.
rigor, *m.*, —, severity, sternness.
rincón, *m.*, corner, nook, remote, out-of-the-way place.
riña, *f.*, squabble, quarrel, dispute.
riñe, *etc.*, *v.* **reñir**.
riqueza, *f.*, wealth, riches.
risa, *f.*, laugh, laughter.
risotada, *f.*, loud laugh, horse-laugh.
risueño, **-a**, cheerful, smiling, laughing, pleased.
rivalidad, *f.*, rivalry, competition.
rizar, to ruffle, ripple; **—se**, to curl.
robaliza, *f.*, sea-perch.
robar (*pers. indir. obj.*), to steal.
robo, *m.*, theft, robbery.
robusto, **-a**, robust, strong.
rociar, to sprinkle, bathe, bedew.
rodar, to turn, roll.
rodear, to surround, enclose, encircle.
rodilla, *f.*, knee; **de —s**, kneeling.
Rodrigo, *m.*, Roderick.
roer, to gnaw, eat away.
rogar, to pray, beg, implore.
rojizo, **-a**, reddish, crimson.
rojo, **-a**, red, scarlet.
rollo, *m.*, roll.
romano, **-a**, Roman.
romería, *f.*, *v. p. 40, n. 4.*
romper, to break, destroy; **— á**, to begin, start, break out, burst forth.
ronco, **-a**, hoarse, discordant.
ropa, *f.*, clothes.
rosa, *f.*, rose; pink, rosy.
rostro, *m.*, face, countenance.
roto, **-a**, *p.p.* **romper**; broken, torn, ragged; destroyed, at an end, broken off.
rozar, to brush, graze, rub against.
rubio, **-a**, fair, blond.
rubor, *m.*, blush, shame.
ruborizado, **-a**, blushing, flushed.
rudeza, *f.*, roughness, rudeness; simplicity.
rudo, **-a**, rude, rough, coarse; severe, hard.
ruego, *m.*, prayer, supplication, entreaty.
Rufo, *m.*, Rufus.
ruido, *m.*, noise, stir, uproar.
ruidoso, **-a**, loud, tumultuous, noisy.
ruina, *f.*, ruin, destruction.
ruinmente, maliciously, basely.
ruinoso, **-a**, ruinous, decayed, dilapidated.
rumbo, *m.*, direction, course, route.
rumor, *m.*, noise, sound, murmur.

S

saber, to know, understand, comprehend; know how to, manage, can; find out, learn.
sabrá, *etc.*, *v.* **saber.**
sabroso, -a, savory, delicious, delightful.
sacar, to draw; take, pull, bring out; free, extricate; remove; discover; — **de apuros,** to help out of difficulties, trouble.
sacerdote, *m.*, priest.
sacrificio, *m.*, sacrifice, offering.
sacristán, *m.*, —, sexton.
sacristana, *f.*, wife of sacristan.
sacrosanto, -a, sacred, hallowed, divine.
sacudida, *f.*, shock, jerk, impact, shake.
sacudir, to shake, shake out; beat, flap.
sagaz, wary, shrewd, artful.
sala, *f.*, parlor, hall, drawing-room.
salar, to salt, cure.
saldo, *m.*, settlement, balance.
saldremos, *etc.*, *v.* **salir.**
salida, *f.*, departure, removal; exit, outlet, environs, outskirts; excursion, expedition, trip, journey.
salido, -a, prominent, projecting, bulging.
saliente, salient, prominent.
salir (á), to go out, leave, depart, set out; come out *or* forth, issue from; result; — **al** (*name of fish*), to go out — fishing; — **de,** to recover from, get over; —**se,** *v. p. 13, n. 4.*
salita, *f.*, *dim.* **sala.**
salmonete, *m.*, red mullet.
salón, *m.*, —, hall, drawing-room.
salpicar, to spatter, splash.
salsa, *f.*, spray.
saltar, to jump, spring, leap, frisk, skip; burst forth; — **en tierra,** to land, leap ashore.
salto, *m.*, leap, hop, bound; **á —s,** in jumps *or* leaps.
salud, *f.*, health, welfare, prosperity; soundness, safety.
saludable, salutary, wholesome, healthful.
saludar, to greet, bow, speak to.
saludo, *m.*, greeting.
salvaje, savage, fierce.
salvar, to save; go, pass *or* jump over; cross; —**se,** to escape.
salvo, á *or* **en —,** in safety, safe.
sandio, -a, nonsensical, absurd, foolish.
sangrar, to bleed.
sangre, *f.*, blood.
sangría, *f.*, bleeding; cheating.
sangriento, -a, bloody, cruel.
sano, -a, healthy, sound, sane; — **de la cabeza,** in one's right mind.
Santa Cruz, *prop. name,* Holy Cross.
santo, -a, holy, blessed.
santo, *m.*, saint.
sarcástico, -a, sarcastic, scornful, satirical.
sardina, *f.*, sardine.
sarta, *f.*, string, row.
sartén, *f.*, frying-pan.
satírico, -a, satirical.
satisfacción, *f.*, satisfaction, pleasure, contentment.
satisfecho, -a, *p.p.* **satisfacer,** satisfied, content.
sazón, *f.*, time.
sé, *v.* **saber.**
secar, to dry, wipe; grow dry.
seco, -a, dry, withered; **en —,** high and dry.
secretario, *m.*, secretary, clerk, registrar.
secreto, -a, secret, hidden, private.
secreto, *m.*, secret, secrecy.
secundar, to second, favor.

sedujo, *etc., v.* **seducir.**
seducir, to seduce, persuade, tempt, deceive, entice.
seductor, *m.,* deceiver.
seguida, *f.,* sequence; **en —,** directly, soon, at once; **venir en —,** to follow.
seguido, -**a,** continued, prolonged.
seguir, to follow, proceed, continue, go *or* keep on; **— el humor,** sympathize w. (one's) mood.
según, according to, as.
segundo, -**a,** second.
seguramente, surely, certainly.
seguro, -**a,** secure, safe, firm, steady; **á —,** in safety.
seis, six.
semblante, *m.,* face; appearance *or* signs of the weather; *v. p. 7, n. 1, and p. 52, n. 4.*
semejante (**á**), resembling, like, similar, such.
semejanza, *f.,* resemblance, likeness; **á — de,** like.
semejar, to be like, resemble.
sencillo, -**a,** simple, natural, plain; guileless.
sendero, *m.,* path.
seno, *m.,* bosom.
sensible, sensitive, susceptible, impressionable.
sentarse, to sit down.
sentenciar, to condemn, sentence.
sentenciosamente, significantly, meaningly, pointedly.
sentido, *m.,* sense, feeling; **sin —,** unconscious.
sentimiento, *m.,* feeling, emotion; sorrow, grief.
sentir, to feel; feel sorry for, regret; hear, see; **—se,** to feel oneself.
seña, *f.,* sign, mark, emotion.
señá, *f.,* "Dame," *v. p. 14, n. 5.*
señal, *f.,* sign, token, signal; **en — de,** in token of.
señalado, -**a,** celebrated, renowned; marked.
señalar, to mark *or* point out, point to; show, designate, fix, appoint.
señor, *m.,* sir, gentleman, lord.
señora, *f.,* madam, mistress.
señorear, to command, overlook.
señorial, seignorial, lordly.
sepa, *etc., v.* **saber.**
separado, -**a,** separate, distant, apart.
separar, to separate, part, lay aside; **—se,** to separate; **—se de,** to part company, leave.
sepultar, to bury.
sér, *m.,* being.
serenamente, quietly, calmly, dispassionately.
serenar, to calm, compose, tranquillize.
serenidad, *f.,* serenity; peacefulness, clearness.
sereno, -**a,** undisturbed, unruffled, composed, placid.
seriedad, *f.,* seriousness, gravity, soberness.
serio, -**a,** serious, earnest; vexed; **en —,** seriously.
serpear, to wind, meander.
servir, to serve, be useful *or* do duty for; **— de,** to serve as *or* for; **— para,** to be good for; **—se (de),** to make use of, employ.
sesenta, sixty.
setecientos, -**as,** seven hundred.
setiembre, September.
severamente, severely, sternly.
severidad, *f.,* severity, harshness.
Sevilla, Seville.
sexo, *m.,* sex.
sí, yes, certainly; so.
si, if, whether; why! *v. p. 126, n. 3.*
siempre, always, forever; **— que,** whenever; provided that

sien, *f.*, temple.
siento, *etc.*, *v.* **sentar, sentir.**
sierra, *f.*, mountain (range).
siete, seven.
sigas, *etc.*, *v.* **seguir.**
sigilo, *m.*, secrecy, concealment; **con —,** secretly.
siglo, *m.*, century.
significar, to signify, mean.
signo, *m.*, sign, gesture, motion, nod. [cessive.
siguiente, following, next, suc-
sílaba, *f.*, syllable.
silbar, to whistle, whiz.
silbido, *m.*, whistle.
silencio, *m.*, silence, stillness, hush.
silenciosamente, softly, quietly.
silencioso, -a, silent, still.
silueta, *f.*, silhouette, outline.
silla, *f.*, chair, seat.
sillón, *m.*, arm-chair.
simular, to pretend.
simultáneo, -a, simultaneous, all together.
sin, without; **— embargo,** notwithstanding, however, nevertheless; **— que,** without.
sinceramente, sincerely, heartily, honestly.
síncope, *f.*, fainting-fit, swoon.
siniestro, -a, vicious, evil; odious.
sino, but, except; besides, only; **— que,** but on the contrary.
sinsabor, *m.*, disgust, unpleasantness, trouble.
sintiendo, *etc.*, *v.* **sentir.**
siquiera, even, ever, scarcely, although, otherwise; **ni —,** not even.
sirva, *etc.*, *v.* **servir.**
sistema, *m.*, system.
sitio, *m.*, place, spot.
situación, *f.*, situation, condition, position.
so, under; **— pena de,** under penalty of.
soberbia, *f.*, pride, arrogance.
soberbio, -a, proud, haughty.
sobrado, -a, extreme, excessive; rich, well off; **— de dinero,** affluent.
sobrar, to be left over, remain; have over and above one's needs.
sobre, on, upon, on the top of, over; about, concerning; beyond, off; in addition to.
sobrecogido, -a, surprised, overcome, apprehensive, afraid.
sobrenatural, supernatural.
sobresaltado, -a, fearful, terrified.
sobresaltar, to surprise, startle; strike.
sobrio, -a, sober, temperate, abstemious.
sociedad, *f.*, association, partnership.
socorrer, to help, assist, succor.
socorro, *m.*, help, aid.
sofocante, suffocating, stifling, oppressive.
sol, *m.*, sun, day.
solamente, only, solely.
solariego, -a, manorial, ancestral.
solazarse, to amuse, entertain, enjoy oneself.
soldada, *f.*, wages, pay.
soledad, *f.*, solitude, loneliness, seclusion.
solemne, solemn, impressive.
solemnemente, solemnly, seriously.
solemnidad, *f.*, solemnity, gravity.
soler, to be wont, accustomed to; use to, be apt to.
solicitar, to solicit, petition, apply.
solícito, -a, solicitous, ready, anxious.
solitario, -a, solitary, lonely, deserted.

solo, -a, alone, solitary, lonely; **á —as,** alone, in private.
sólo, only, solely.
soltar, to loosen, let go, unfasten; throw, discharge, emit; burst forth (into laughter); give out (bad news).
sollo, *m.*, sturgeon.
sollozar, to sob.
sollozo, *m.*, sob.
sombra, *f.*, shadow, shade.
sombrero, *m.*, hat.
sombrío, -a, sombre, gloomy, dark.
sometido, -a, subject, subjected, exposed.
sonar, to sound, ring.
sonido, *m.*, sound, noise.
sonreír, to smile.
sonríen, *etc.*, *v.* **sonreír.**
sonriente, smiling.
sonrisa, *f.*, smile.
sonrosado, -a, rosy, blushing, red.
soñar, to dream.
soplar, to blow.
sordamente, dully, thickly.
sordo, -a, deaf; dull, monotonous, muffled; quiet, faint, far off.
sorprender, to surprise, astonish, take unaware.
sorpresa, *f.*, surprise, amazement.
sosegado, -a, calm, peaceful, quiet.
sosegar, to calm, pacify, lull; grow quiet, die down; rest.
sosiego, *m.*, calmness, composure, serenity; peace, quiet.
sosiegue, *etc.*, *v.* **sosegar.**
sospecha, *f.*, suspicion, conjecture.
sospechar, to suspect.
sospechoso, -a, suspicious.
sostienen, *etc.*, *v.* **sostener.**
sostener, to hold (out); support, help, maintain; endure, suffer.
sostenga, *etc.*, *v.* **sostener.**
sostenido, -a, sustained, prolonged.
sostenimiento, *m.*, support, maintenance.
sotavento, *m.*, lee, leeward.
Sr., *v.* **señor.**
suave, gentle, mild.
suavemente, gently, pleasantly, kindly.
subir (á), to go up, rise, climb; raise, draw up; go upstairs.
súbitamente, suddenly, instantly.
súbito, sudden, quick, hasty; **de —,** unexpectedly, suddenly.
suceder, to happen, occur, take place, come about; **— (á),** to follow, succeed.
sucesivamente, in succession.
sucesivo, lo —, the future.
suceso, *m.*, occurrence, event; result, success.
sucio, -a, soiled, dirty, filthy.
sudar, to sweat, perspire; toil.
sudor, *m.*, perspiration, sweat; labor.
sueldo, *m.*, wages, stipend.
suele, *etc.*, *v.* **soler.**
suelo, *m.*, floor; ground, soil; surface.
suelta, *etc.*, *v.* **soltar.**
suelto, -a, loose, streaming; light, swift, easy, free.
suenan, *etc.*, *v.* **sonar.**
sueño, *m.*, sleep, slumber; dream.
suerte, *f.*, luck, fortune, fate, chance; lot; manner, mode, way; **de — que,** so that, in such a way that; **de otra —,** otherwise.
suficiencia, *f.*, sufficiency, confidence, self-reliance, boldness.
suficiente, sufficient, enough.
sufrido, -a, patient, long-suffering.
sufrir, to suffer, bear, endure; support, sustain; meet with (loss).

sugerir, to suggest, insinuate.
sugestión, *f.*, suggestion, hint.
sugirió, *etc.*, *v.* **sugerir.**
sujetar, to subdue, fasten, hold fast; control.
sujeto, –a, caught, bound, grasped; exposed, subject, liable.
sumamente, highly, exceedingly.
sumar, to sum up, add.
sumido, –a, sunk, submerged; absorbed, overwhelmed.
sumir, to sink.
sumisión, *f.*, submission, obedience, acquiescence.
sumo, –a, highest, greatest, perfect.
supeditado, –a, subjected, controlled, subservient.
superficie, *f.*, surface.
supersticioso, –a, superstitious.
supiese, *etc.*, *v.* **saber.**
supino, –a, impotent, helpless; thoughtless, heedless.
suplicar, to implore, beseech, beg, entreat.
suplicio, *m.*, torture, punishment.
suplir, to supply, provide, furnish, substitute.
suponer, to suppose, surmise, imagine.
supongo, *etc.*, *v.* **suponer.**
supremo, –a, supreme, final.
supuesto, –a, *p.p.* **suponer.**
supuesto, *m.*, supposition, assumption.
surcar, to plough, furrow.
surgir, to rise, appear, surge.
susceptibilidad, *f.*, susceptibility, sensitiveness.
susceptible, sensitive.
suspender, to suspend, hang; stop, delay.
suspenso, –a, uncertain, undecided; surprised, amazed; **en —,** in suspense.
suspiro, *m.*, sigh.
sustentar, to sustain, support; assert, maintain.
sustento, *m.*, support, maintenance, living.
sustituir (á), to replace.
susto, *m.*, fright, terror, shock.
susurro, *m.*, murmur, ripple.
sutilmente, artfully, cunningly, craftily.

T

taberna, *f.*, tavern, wine-shop.
tabernera, *f.*, bar-maid; wife of tavern-keeper.
tabla, *f.*, board, plank, panel.
taburete, *m.*, stool.
taciturno, –a, taciturn, grim, silent, reserved, melancholy.
tal, such, so, as; thus, in such manner, similar; **con — que,** provided that.
talante, countenance, disposition; **de malísimo —,** in a very bad humor.
también, also, likewise, too; moreover.
tampoco, neither, not . . . either, nor . . . either.
tan, as, so, as much, as well; **— . . . como,** as . . . as.
tanto, –a, –os, –as, *adj.*, as *or* so much; as such, so many; very much, very great; *adv.*, so, so much, in such a manner; **— como,** as well as; **— . . . cuanto,** as much . . . as, as well . . . as; **— que,** so much so . . . that; **tantísimo, –a,** so very much, such very great; **mientras —,** meanwhile; **otros —os, (—as),** as many other, as many more; **al — de,** aware of.
tapar, to cover, conceal, hide, veil.
tapia, *f.*, mud-wall, fence.
tapizar, to hang on sides, drape.

tarantán, tan —, tra, la, la, la!
tardar, to delay, take long; **á más —**, at the latest.
tarde, *f.*, afternoon, evening; *adv.*, late, too late; tardily, irregularly (*p. 22, l. 31*); **á la —**, in the afternoon; **por la(s) —(s)**, in the afternoon(s).
tardo, -a, slow, sluggish.
tarea, *f.*, task, toil, drudgery.
teatral, theatrical; affected, false.
teatro, *m.*, theatre.
techo, *m.*, roof, ceiling.
tejado, *m.*, roof.
tejer, to weave, knit.
tema, *m.*, theme, subject.
temblar, to tremble, shake, be afraid.
temblor, *m.*, shudder, tremor.
tembloroso, -a, tremulous, quivering, shaking.
temer, to fear, dread; be afraid.
temerario, -a, bold, rash.
temeridad, *f.*, rashness, foolhardiness.
temible, terrible, awful; feared, dreaded.
temperamento, *m.*, temperament, constitution.
templado, -a, temperate, moderate, mild.
templo, *m.*, church.
temporada, *f.*, period, season.
temporal, temporary, provisional.
temporal, *m.*, storm, tempest.
temporalmente, temporarily.
temprano, early, soon.
ten, *impv.* **tener**.
tenacidad, *f.*, tenacity, firmness, resolution; steadfastness, constancy.
tenaz, tenacious, hard, stubborn, stout; strong, resolute.
tenaza, *f.*, tongs, pincers.
tenazmente, steadily, fixedly.
tender, to stretch, spread, extend; hand; give (a hand); **—se**, to stretch out at full length.
tendero, *m.*, shop-keeper.
tendrá, *etc.*, *v.* **tener**.
tenebroso, -a, dark, mysterious.
tener, to have, own, possess; hold, grasp, take; keep; employ; contain; **— años**, to be ... years old; **— en**, to value, esteem; **— entre manos**, to have on hand; **— hambre**, to be hungry; **— miedo (á)**, to be afraid; **— noticia de**, to be aware of, know about; **— por**, to hold, consider; **— por costumbre**, to be in the habit (of doing); **— que**, to have to, be obliged to; **— que hacer juntos**, to have business together; **— razón**, to be right; **—se en pie**, to stand; **aquí me tienes**, here I am.
tengamos, *etc.*, *v.* **tener**.
tenor, *m.*, tenor, drift, condition, *v. p. 29, n. 5.*
tentar, to tempt.
tenue, thin, soft, delicate, tenuous, rare.
teñir, to dye, stain, tinge.
tercero, -a, third.
terciopelo, *m.*, velvet.
Teresa, *f.*, Theresa.
terminante, determined, decided, unmistakable.
terminar, to terminate, end, complete, finish, close; end in; **al —**, at the end of.
término, *m.*, term; conduct; **— medio**, intermediate course *or* line of conduct.
terreno, *m.*, land, ground, lot.
terriblemente, frightfully.
terso, -a, terse, smooth, polished, glossy.
tertulia, *f.*, gathering, circle, assembly, party.
tertuliano, -a, guest, frequenter.

tertulio, -a, *m. & f.*, guest, visitor.
testerazo, *m.*, bump.
testigo, *m.*, witness.
testimonio, *m.*, testimony, evidence, proof.
tétrico, -a, gloomy, dark.
tibio, -a, mild, warm.
tiempo, *m.*, time; while; weather; **á —**, in time; **al poco —**, in a short while; **á su —**, in due time, in (its) turn *or* time; **á un —**, all together, at the same time; **hacer . . . —**, . . . time ago; **hace largo —**, long since; for a long time; **más —**, longer; **en otro —**, in former times; **por este —**, about this time.
tienda, *f.*, shop, store.
tiene, *etc.*, *v.* **tener.**
tierno, -a, tender, gentle, affectionate, loving, fond, **lo —**, tenderness.
tierra, *f.*, earth, land; ground, soil, mould; country; lot; **á** *or* **en —**, ashore.
tigre, *m.*, tiger, fury.
tijeras, *f. pl.*, scissors, shears.
tímidamente, timidly, fearfully.
timidez, timidity, bashfulness.
tímido, -a, timid, bashful, shy.
timón, *m.*, helm, rudder.
timonel, *m.*, helmsman, steersman.
tinieblas, *f. pl.*, gloom, darkness.
tintero, *m.*, inkstand.
tío, *m.*, uncle.
tirar, to throw, cast, fling, pitch; **— (á)**, to verge on, tend to; **— (de)**, to draw (away), pull (in *or* away), withdraw; **— de**, to pull at.
tiritar, to shiver, shake.
tiro, *m.*, throw, shot.
Tirol, Tyrol.
tirón, *m.*, jerk, pull, tug.
titubear, to stammer, hesitate, vacillate, waver.
titular, to entitle, name.
tocar, to touch, hit; handle, lay hands on; ring, toll; belong, be one's turn, fall to one's lot *or* share; be related; **—(á)**, to concern; **— (en)**, to lay hands on; strike against.
tocino, *m.*, bacon, salt pork.
todavía, yet, still, nevertheless, even.
todo, -a, -os, -as, *adj.*, each, every, all, whole, entire; **— el mundo,** everybody; **—s los años,** every year; **de— s modos,** anyway, at any rate.
todo, *m.*, whole, entirety, everything; *pl.*, all, everyone, everybody; **del —**, wholly, entirely, quite.
tojo, *m.*, furze, gorse.
toldo, *m.*, awning.
tomar, to take, take up, catch; get, gather; choose; (*w. pers. indir. obj.*), take (from); take possession of; **— en chanza,** to take as a joke; **— en serio,** to take seriously.
Tomás, *m.*, Thomas.
tono, *m.*, tone, manner.
tonto, -a, silly, stupid, dull, foolish.
tonto, -a, *m. & f.*, fool, idiot, dunce.
topar (con), to run *or* strike against, come upon, find, meet with.
torcer, to twist, wring; turn (to right *or* left).
torcido, -a, twisted, crooked, bent.
tormenta, *f.*, storm, tempest, hurricane.
tornar, to return, turn; **— á,** *v. p. 7, n. 5;* **—se,** to turn, become.
torno, *m.*, turn; **en — (de),** around, round about.

torre, *f.*, tower.
torrente, *m.*, torrent.
toscamente, roughly, rudely.
tostadora, *f.*, toaster.
tostar, to toast, roast, parch.
totalmente, wholly, completely.
trabajador, -a, industrious, diligent, painstaking.
trabajar, to work, labor, toil; endeavor.
trabajo, *m.*, work, labor, toil, occupation; task, drudgery; trouble, hardship; **con —**, laboriously, with difficulty.
trabar, to begin, enter upon, take up.
traer, to bring, carry; draw *or* pull (towards oneself); **— arrastrando**, to drag.
traficar (con), to trade, deal in.
tragar, to swallow, devour, engulf.
trágico, -a, tragic, disastrous.
traición, *f.*, treachery, perfidy, faithlessness.
traidoramente, treacherously, uncertainly.
traigas, *etc.*, *v.* **traer**.
traje, *m.*, dress, costume, attire.
trajera, *etc.*, *v.* **traer**.
tramposo, -a, tricky, underhanded, deceitful; *m.* & *f.*, cheat, swindler.
tranquilamente, quietly, calmly, peacefully.
tranquilizar, to calm, pacify, reassure; **—se**, to quiet down, be reassured.
tranquilo, -a, quiet, calm, easy.
transido, -a, exhausted, worn out.
trapo, *m.*, rag; sails, canvas.
tras, behind, after, beyond.
trascurrir, to elapse, pass by *or* away.
trasformar, to change, transform, alter, transfigure; **—se**, to be transformed *or* changed into.
trasladar, to move, transfer.
traslucir, to shine through, appear; **—se**, to be inferred.
trasluzca, *etc.*, *v.* **traslucir**.
trasparente, transparent, clear.
trasportar, to carry, convey, remove.
trastienda, *f.*, back shop.
tratar, to treat, discuss; **— de**, to try, endeavor, attempt; **—se de**, to be a matter of.
trato, *m.*, treatment, usage.
través, al — de, across, through.
trayendo, *etc.*, *v.* **traer**.
traza, *f.*, plan, scheme.
trazar, to trace, draw, mark.
trecho, *m.*, space, distance; **de — en —**, at intervals.
tregua, *f.*, truce, respite, intermission.
treinta, thirty.
tremendo, -a, fearful, terrible, dreadful.
tremolar, to wave, flutter.
trémulo, -a, trembling, tremulous, quivering, shaking.
trepar, to climb, clamber, mount.
tres, three.
trescientos, -as, three hundred.
tributo, *m.*, tribute, contribution, offering, meed.
trinquete, *m.*, foresail.
tripa, *f.*, entrails.
tripulación, *f.*, crew.
tripulante, sailor, member of crew.
tripular, to man.
triste, sad, sorrowful; mournful, dismal, dull; gloomy, sombre, heavy.
tristemente, sadly, mournfully.
tristeza, *f.*, sadness, melancholy, gloom.
triunfal, triumphant.
triunfante, triumphant, exultant.

triunfo, *m.*, triumph, victory, exultation.
trocar, to change, exchange.
trocha, *f.*, cross-path, short cut.
tropezar, to stumble, strike against; — **(con),** to meet with, find, come upon.
trotar, to trot.
trozo, *m.*, piece, block, section.
trueno, *m.*, thunder, thunder-clap.
tumba, *f.*, grave, sepulchre.
tuno, *m.*, rogue, rascal, wretch.
turbación, *f.*, confusion, disturbance, perturbation.
turbar, to disturb, upset, trouble, disquiet, alarm; confuse, obscure; **—se,** to be uneasy, confused; **hacer —se,** to trouble, alarm; **ir turbándose,** to grow troubled.
turbio, -a, turbid, muddy.
tutelar, guardian, protecting.
tuvieron, *etc.*, *v.* **tener.**

U

ú, or (before **o** *or* **ho**).
ufano, -a, proud, conceited, arrogant; cheerful.
últimamente, finally, at last.
último, -a, last, final, hindmost; **por —,** finally, at last.
unánime, unanimous, general, universal.
unción, *f.*, extreme unction.
únicamente, only, solely, singly.
único, -a, only, sole; **lo único,** the only thing.
unido, -a, attached; uniform.
unir, to join, unite, couple, combine.
universalmente, universally, generally.
uno, -a, *m.* & *f.*, one, someone, anyone; *num.*, one; *pl.*, some, several, a few; some people; **— á otro,** one another, each other; **— y otro,** both; **—os y** (*or* **tras**) **otros,** one after another; **la una,** one o'clock; **—os cuantos,** several.
unto, *m.*, salve, ointment.
uña, *f.*, (finger-)nail; claw; clutch.
urbanidad, *f.*, courtesy, politeness, good breeding.
urgente, urgent, pressing, important.
usar, to use, wear.
uso, *m.*, use; exercise; wearing.
útil, useful, usable; serviceable, profitable.
utilizar, to utilize, make use of.

V

va, *etc.*, *v.* **ir.**
vaciar, to empty, pour out, discharge.
vacilante, vacillating, uncertain, hesitating.
vacilar, to vacillate, hesitate, waver.
vacío, -a, empty.
vaivén, *m.*, commotion, fluctuation, undulation.
valer, to be worth, amount to; avail, serve as a protection; (*w. pers. indir. obj.*), yield, bring; **—se (de),** to employ, make use of, have recourse to, avail oneself of.
valor, *m.*, courage, bravery, manliness, fortitude; value, price; **dar —,** to encourage.
¡vamos! come! come now!
vanidad, *f.*, vanity, conceit.
vano, -a, ineffectual, fruitless, futile; **en —,** in vain.
vapor, *m.*, mist.
vapuleado, -a, whipped, flogged, chastised, chastened.
variante, *f.*, variation, difference.

[illegible]

vé, *imper.* [illegible]

[illegible]

vegetar, to vegetate.

vehemencia, *f.*, vehemence, impetuosity.

veía, [illegible] **ver.**

veinte, twenty.

veinticuatro, twenty-four.

veintidós, twenty-two.

vejar, to tease, vex, annoy, plague, torment, harass, agitate.

vela, *f.*, sail, ship; awning; watch; watchman; **de —,** on guard.

velar, to cover, hide, veil; watch, be attentive, vigilant.

velocidad, *f.*, velocity, swiftness, rapidity.

velón, *m.*, lamp.

veloz, quick, fast, swift.

velozmente, rapidly, swiftly, speedily, hastily.

ven, *imper.* **venir.**

vencer, to overcome; conquer, vanquish, master, subdue; triumph over, prevail upon.

vendaval, *m.*, strong south-west wind, wind storm.

vender, to sell, dispose of; **—se,** betray oneself.

vendrá, [illegible] **venir.**

veneno, *m.*, poison, venom.

veneración, *f.*, veneration, respect, honor.

venerando, -a, venerable, sacred.

venga, [illegible] **venir.**

venganza, *f.*, vengeance, r[illegible]

vengo, [illegible] **venir.**

venida, *f.*, coming, arrival.

venir, *irr.*, to come, draw near, approach, advance; move forward, go toward; **—se abajo,** to fall, collapse.

ventana, *f.*, window; nostril.

ventar, to blow.

ventilar, to air, discuss (business).

ventura, *f.*, luck, chance, fortune; **por —,** perchance, perhaps.

ver, to see, glance at; scrutinize, scan, look into, examine; **—se,** to be seen, find oneself, be; **á** [illegible] *v. p.* [illegible], *n. 1.*

verano, *m.*, summer.

veras, *f. pl.*, truth, reality; **de —,** really, truly, certainly, sincerely, indeed.

verdad, *f.*, truth, reality, fact; **á la —,** indeed, in truth.

verdadero, -a, veritable, genuine, actual, real.

verde, green.

verdugo, *m.*, hangman, executioner.

vereda, *f.*, foot-path.

vergonzoso, -a, bashful, shy, shamefaced.

vergüenza, *f.*, shame, disgrace; **sin —,** *m. or f.*, *v. p. 45, n. 1.*

verter, to shed.

vertiginoso, -a, giddy, dizzying, bewildering.

vestir, to clothe, dress.

vetusto, -a, ancient, old.

vez, *f.*, time, turn, occasion; **á la —**, at once, at the same time, together; **á su —**, in his (her, etc.) turn; **á veces**, at times, occasionally; **cada — más**, more and more; **de — en cuando**, from time to time; **en — de**, instead of; **otra —**, again, once more; **pocas veces**, seldom; **por dos —**, twice over; **rara —**, rarely, seldom; **repetidas —**, repeatedly; **tal —**, perhaps, perchance; **una —**, once, on one occasion; **unas —**, sometimes, at times.
vía, *f.*, road, way.
viaje, *m.*, journey, trip.
vianda, *f.*, food, provisions, viands.
víbora, *f.*, viper.
vibrante, vibrating, quivering.
vicio, *m.*, vice.
vicioso, -a, vicious, corrupt, depraved.
víctima, *f.*, victim.
victoria, *f.*, victory, conquest, triumph.
victorioso, -a, victorious, triumphant.
vida, *f.*, life, existence; living, livelihood.
vieja, *f.*, old woman.
viejo, -a, old, aged; antiquated, old-fashioned.
viene, *etc.*, *v.* **venir.**
viernes, *m.*, Friday.
viento, *m.*, wind, breeze.
vigilar, to watch over, superintend.
vigorosamente, vigorously, energetically, hard.
villa, *f.*, villa, country-house; town.
villanía, *f.*, villainy, baseness, crime.
villano, -a, *m.* & *f.*, villein, peasant, vassal.
vinagre, *m.*, vinegar.
viniendo, *etc.*, *v.* **venir.**
vino, *m.*, wine.
violencia, *f.*, violence, intensity, fierceness, fury, rage.
violento, -a, violent, vehement, furious.
violeta, *f.*, violet; lavender, purple.
Virgen, *f.*, the Virgin (Mary).
virtud, *f.*, virtue, force, strength; uprightness, integrity, rectitude; force, efficacy.
virtuoso, -a, virtuous, upright, honorable.
visible, —, evident, manifest.
visita, *f.*, visit, call.
visitar, to visit, see, call on; inspect.
vislumbrar, to catch a glimpse, see faintly; glimpse; **—se,** to glimmer, shine faintly.
víspera, *f.*, eve; **en —s de,** on the point of, about to.
vista, *f.*, —, view, outlook, prospect; gaze, sight, eyes; **á la —**, in view, near; **en — de,** with reference to; **quitar la —**, to obstruct the view; **hasta la —**, *au revoir.*
visto, -a, *p.p.* **ver.**
viuda, *f.*, widow.
vivamente, quickly, rapidly, excitedly.
vivienda, *f.*, dwelling, lodging, shelter.
vivir, to live, be, exist; dwell, inhabit.
vivo, -a, alive, living; alight, kindled; quick, active, bright, spirited; loud, lively, emphatic; deep; vehement, intense; hasty, impulsive; **en lo más —**, to the very quick.
vizcaíno, -a, Biscayan, of Biscay, Vizcaya.
vociferar, to shout, exclaim, bawl, clamor.
volar, to fly (around), flutter, hover.
voltear, to swoop, fly around, whirl.

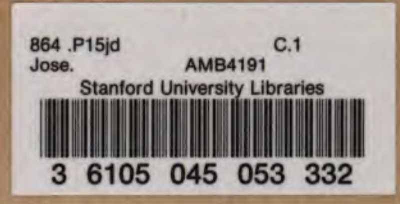
voluntad, *f.*, will, consent, wish, desire, choice.
voluntariamente, voluntarily, willingly.
voluptuoso, -a, voluptuous, pleasurable, agreeable.
volver, to turn, return, come back; direct; — **á** + *inf.*, *v. p. 7, n. 5;* — **en sí,** to regain consciousness; — **sobre los pasos,** to retrace one's steps; —**se,** to turn; —**se loco,** to go mad; —**se (á),** to turn, become; turn towards, turn about.
vomitar (*pers. indir. obj.*), to discharge, shower, pour out, spit out.
voto, *m.*, vow, tribute.
voy, *v.* **ir.**
voz, *f.*, voice, cry, call, clamor; report, rumor, public opinion; **á una** —, all together; **en alta** —, aloud; **á voces,** loudly, noisily.
vuelo, *m.*, flight.
vuelta, *f.*, turn, return; *v. p. 11, n. 1; p. 30, n. 6; p. 82, n. 1; p. 107, n. 1; p. 145, n. 3; p. 153, n. 1.*
vuelto, -a, *p.p.* **volver.**
vuelva, *etc.*, *v.* **volver.**

Y

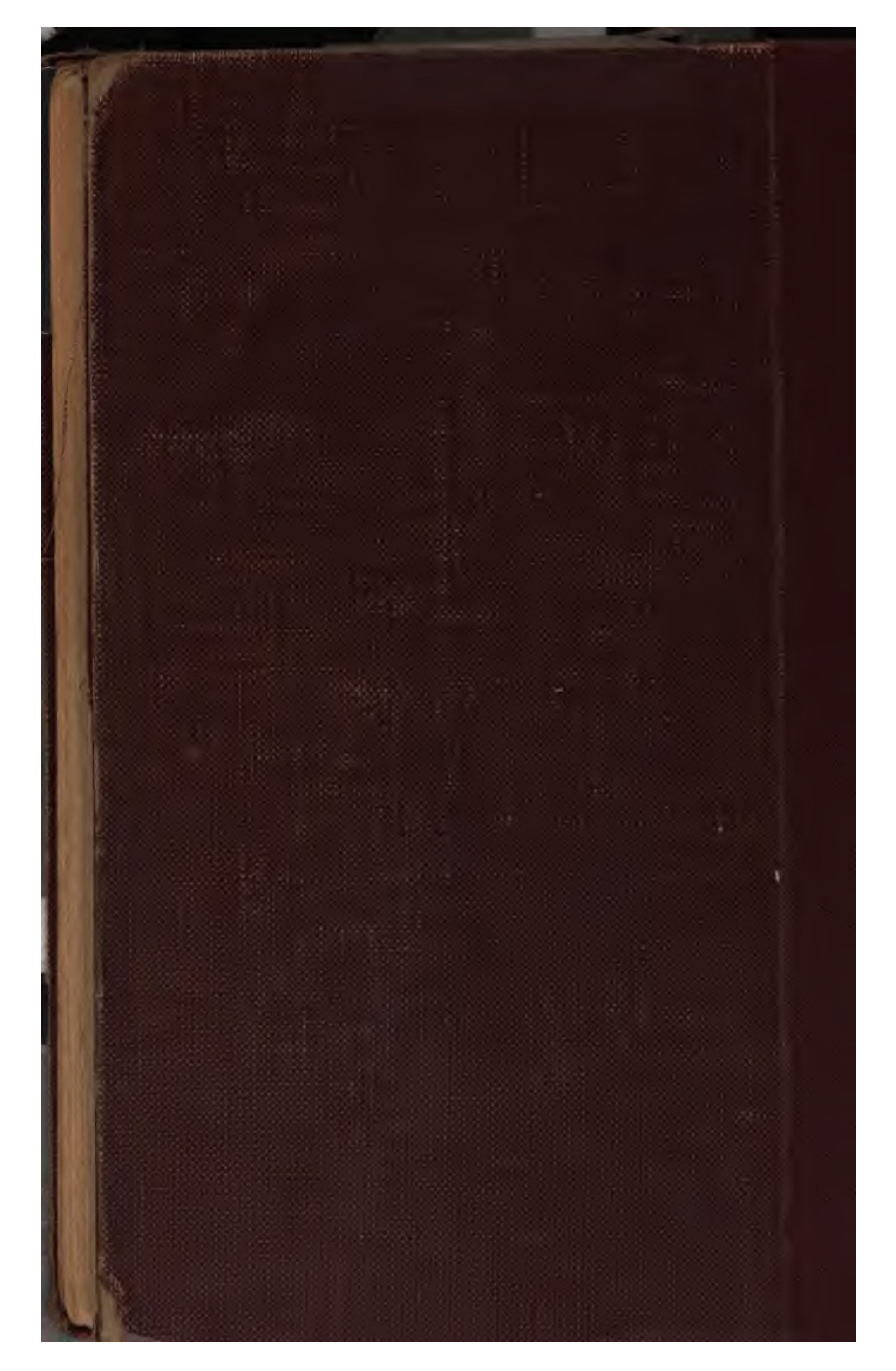
y, and.
ya, already, now, immediately; then, presently; later; well!; — **no,** no longer; —**sé,** I know; **ya que,** even if.
yacer, to lie.
yerto, -a, motionless, stiff; numb, rigid; petrified, paralyzed (w. fear).
yugo, *m.*, yoke, power, irksome authority.

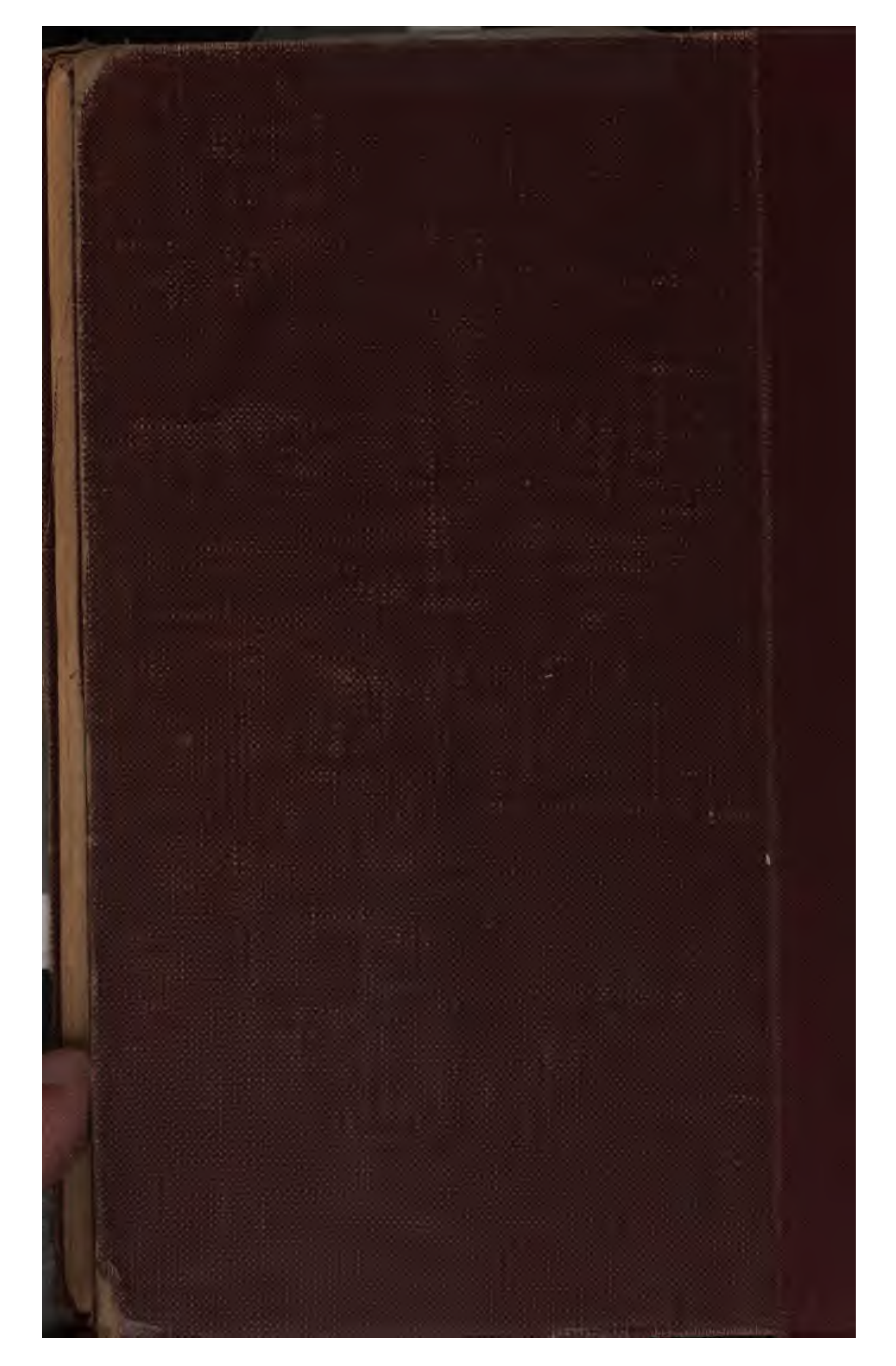
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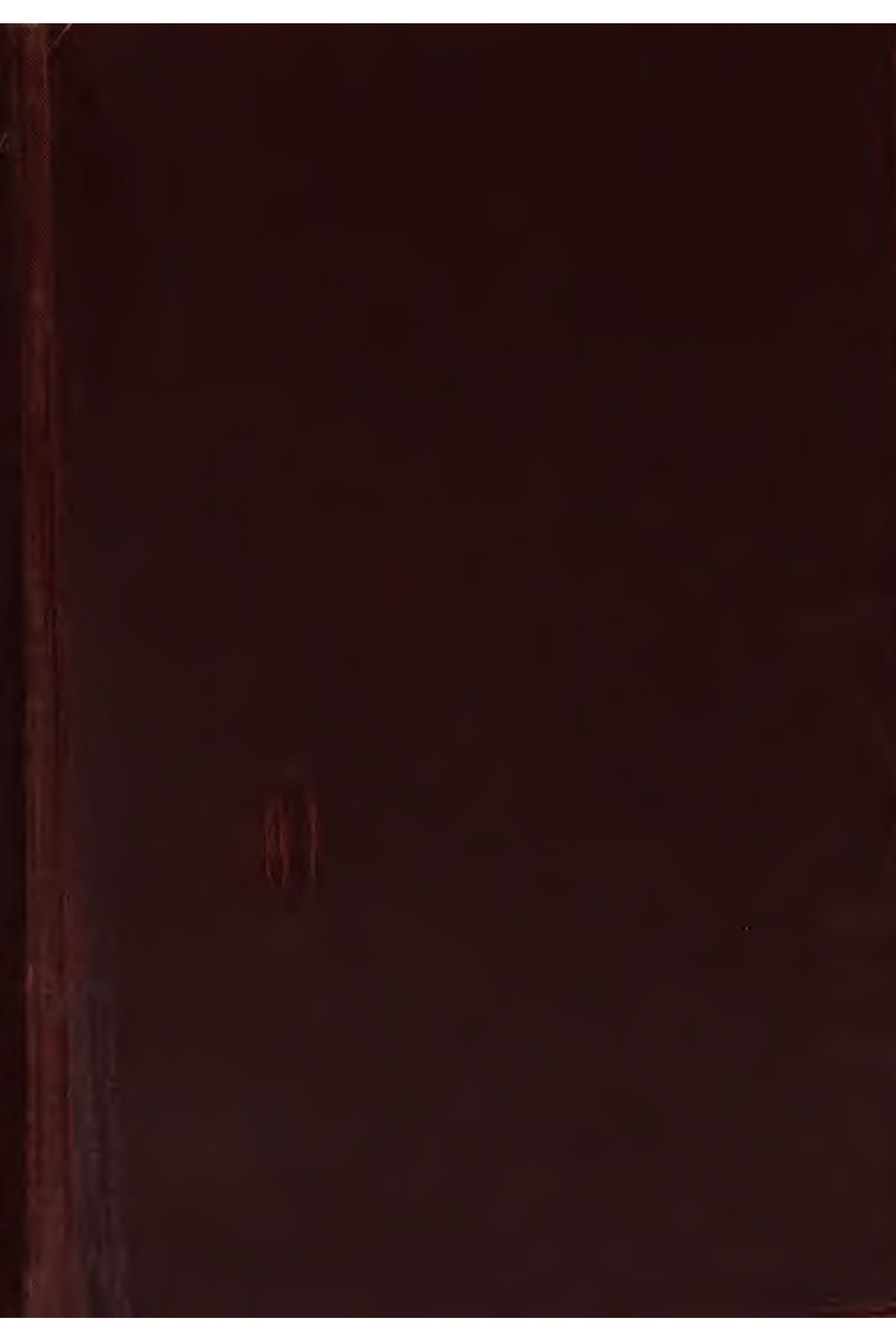
zagala, *f.*, lass, maid.
zaguán, *m.*, entrance, vestibule, hall.
zalamero, -a, flattering, wheedling, coaxing, fawning.
zambombo, *m.*, fool, clown, lubber, cur.
zángano, *m.*, idler, drone.
zapato, *m.*, shoe.
zarco, -a, pale blue.
zarza, *f.*, bramble.
¡zas! bang! slap!
zoquete, *m.*, morsel, bit, crumb, bite, mouthful.
zorra, *f.*, fox.
zozobra, *f.*, anxiety, worry.
zozobrar, to founder, sink, capsize.
zumba, *f.*, joke; **con** —, jestingly, jocularly, facetiously.
zumbar, to joke, tease; resound, hum, buzz, ring, roar.
zumbido, *m.*, buzzing, humming, murmur.
zutano, -a, *m. & f.*, so-and-so, such-a-one.












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FROTH

FROTH

A NOVEL

BY

ARMANDO PALACIO VALDÉS

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH

BY

CLARA BELL



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1891

INTRODUCTION.

ACCORDING to the Spanish critics, the novel has flourished in Spain during only two epochs—the golden age of Cervantes and the period in which we are still living. That unbroken line of romance-writing which has existed for so long a time in France and in England, is not to be looked for in the Peninsula. The novel in Spain is a re-creation of our own days; but it has made, since the middle of the nineteenth century, two or three fresh starts. The first modern Spanish novelists were what are called the *walter-scottistas,* although they were inspired as much by George Sand as by the author of *Waverley.* These writers were of a romantic order, and Fernan Caballero, whose earliest novel dates from 1849, was at their head. The Revolution of September, 1868, marked an advance in Spanish fiction, and Valera came forward as the leader of a more national and more healthily vitalised species of imaginative work. The pure and exquisite style of Valera is, doubtless, only to be appreciated by a Castilian. Something of its charm may be divined, however, even in the English translation of his masterpiece, *Pepita Jimenez.* The mystical

and aristocratic genius of Valera appealed to a small audience; he has confided to the world that when all were praising but few were buying his books.

Far greater fecundity and a more directly successful appeal to the public, were, somewhat later, the characteristics of Perez y Galdos, whose vigorous novels, spoiled a little for a foreign reader by their didactic diffuseness, are well-known in this country. In the hands of Galdos, a further step was taken by Spanish fiction towards the rejection of romantic optimism and the adoption of a modified realism. In Pereda, so the Spanish critics tell us, a still more valiant champion of naturalism was found, whose studies of local manners in the province of Santander recall to mind the paintings of Teniers. About 1875 was the date when the struggle commenced in good earnest between the schools of romanticism and realism. In 1881 Galdos definitely joined the ranks of the realists with his *La Desheredada*. An eminent Spanish writer, Emilio Pardo Bazan, thus described the position some six years ago: "It is true that the battle is not a noisy one, and excites no great warlike ardour. The question is not taken up amongst us with the same heat as in France, and this from several causes. In the first place, the idealists with us do not walk in the clouds so much as they do in France, nor do the realists load their palette so heavily. Neither school exaggerates in order to distinguish itself from the other. Perhaps our public is indifferent to literature, especially to printed

literature, for what is represented on the stage produces more impression."

This indifference of the Spanish reading public, which has led a living novelist to declare that a person of good position in Madrid would rather spend his money on fireworks or on oranges than on a book, has at length been in a measure dissipated by a writer who is not merely admired and distinguished, but positively popular, and who, without sacrificing style, has conquered the unwilling Spanish public. This is Armando Palacio Valdés, who was born on the 4th of October, 1853, in a hamlet of Asturias, called Entralgo, where his family had at one time a mansion which has now disappeared. The family spent only the summer there; the remainder of the year they passed in Avilés, the maritime town which Valdés describes under the name of Nieva in his novel *Marta y Maria.* From Asturias he went, when still a youth, up to Madrid to study the law as a profession. But even in the lawyer's office, his dream was to become a man of letters. His ambition took the form of obtaining at some university a chair of political economy, to which science he had, or fancied himself to have, at that time, a great proclivity.

Before terminating his legal studies, the young man published several articles in the *Revista Europea* on philosophical and religious questions. These articles attracted the attention of the proprietor of that review, and Valdés presently joined the staff. Next year he became editor. He was at the

head of the *Revista Europea*, at that time the most important periodical in Spain from a scientific point of view, for several years. During that time he published the main part of those articles of literary criticism, particularly on contemporary poets and novelists, which have since been collected in several volumes—*Los Oradores del Ateneo* ("The Orators of the Athenæum"); *Los Novelistas Españoles* ("The Spanish Novelists"); *Un Nuevo Viaje al Parnaso* ("A New Journey to Parnassus"), sketches of the living poets of Spain; and, in particular, a very bright collection of review articles, published in conjunction with Leopoldo Alas, *La Literatura en* 1881 ("Spanish Literature in 1881"). These gave Valdés a foremost rank among the critics of the day. He wrote nc more criticism, or very little; he determined to place himsel amongst those whose creative work demands the careful con sideration of the best judges.

Soon after he took the direction of the *Revista*, Valdé wrote his first novel, *El Señorito Octavio*, which was no published until 1881. In 1883 he brought out his *Marta* *Maria*, a book which, I know not why, is called "The Marqui of Peñalta" in its English version. This novel enjoyed a extraordinary success, and had more of the graphic an sprightly manner by which Valdés has since been distinguishec than the books which immediately followed it. Spanis critics, indeed, remembering the wonderful freshness of *Mart y Maria*, still often speak of it as the best of Valdés' storie

In this same year, 1883, he married, on the day when he completed his thirty years, a young lady of sixteen. His marriage was a honeymoon of a year and a half, of which *El Idílio de un Enfermo* ("The Idyl of an Invalid"), a short novel of 1884, portrays the earlier portion. His wife died early in 1885, leaving him with an infant son, to be, as he says, "my illusion and my fascination." His subsequent career has been laborious and systematic. He has published one novel every year. In 1885 it was *José*, a shorter tale of sea-faring life on the stormy coast of the author's native province. About the same time appeared a collection of short stories, called *Aguas Fuertes* ("Strong Waters").

It was not until 1886, however, that Valdés began to rank among the foremost novelists of Europe. In that year he published his great story, *Riverita*, one of the characters in which, a charming child, became the heroine of his next book, *Maximina*, 1887. Of this character he writes to me: "My Maximina in these two books is but a pale reflection of that being from whom Providence parted me before she was eighteen years of age. In these novels I have painted a great part of my life." A Sevillian novice, who has helped to care for Maximina in Madrid, reigns supreme in a succeeding novel, *La Hermana San Sulpicio* ("Sister San Sulpicio"), 1889. But between these two last there comes a massive novel, describing the adventures of a journalist who founds a newspaper in the provincial town of Sarrió, by which

Santander seems to be intended. This book is called *E*
Cuarto Poder ("The Fourth Power"), and was published in 1888. To these must now be added *La Espuma* ("Froth"), of which a translation is here given. When these words are published, the original will just have appeared in Madrid. It is by the kindness of the author, in supplying us with a set of proof-sheets, that I am able to speak of a book which even the critics of Madrid have not yet seen in Spanish.

In *La Espuma* Valdés has reverted from those country scenes and those streets of provincial cities which he has hitherto loved best to paint, and has given us a sternly satiric picture of the frothy surface of fashionable life in Madrid From the illusions of the poor, pathetic and often beautiful, he has turned to the ugly cynicism of the wealthy. With his passion for honesty and simplicity, his heart burns within him at the parade and hollowness which he detects in aristocratic and bureaucratic Madrid. One conceives that, like his own Raimundo, he has been invited to enter it, has taken his fill o its pleasures, and has found his mouth filled with ashes. Hi talent for portraiture was never better employed. If he i occasionally tempted to commit the peculiarly Spanish fault o exaggeration—scarcely a fault there, where the shadows are s black and the colours so flaring—he has resisted it in his mor important characters. The brutality of the Duke de Requena the sagacity and urbanity of Father Ortega, the saintly sweetnes

of the Duchess, the naïveté of Raimundo, the sphinx-like charm of Clementina de Osorio, with her mysterious sweetness and duplicity, these are among the salient points of characterisation which stand out in this powerful book. *La Espuma* is a cry from the desert to those who wear soft raiment in kings' palaces. It is the ruthless tearing aside of the conventions by a Knox or a Savonarola. It is stringent satire, yet tempered with an artist's moderation, with a naturalist's self-suppression.

Those exquisite descriptions of Nature in which Valdés sparingly illuminates the pages of his country-novels, must not be looked for here. There is nothing in *La Espuma* like the splendid approach to Seville in *La Hermana San Sulpício*, or the noble picture of the Asturian sea-board, ravaged by the ocean, in *José*. The desolation of the mining district, at the close of the book, is all that we can compare with these. But one descriptive gift of Valdés, his power of rendering with sustained vivacity a varied social scene, was never better exemplified than by the dinner-party at the Osorios', by Salabert's ball to Royalty, in which Clementina ejects the *demi-mondaine*, or by the scene in Pepe's dressing-room when the mad Marquis wants to shoot him. The absence of sensational emphasis of every kind is notable. This is the result of severe self-training on the novelist's part. He has confessed himself displeased with the end of his own *Riverita* as too theatrical, and in the prologue to *La Hermana San Sulpício*, he wears a white sheet, and holds

a penitential candle for a too stagey episode in *El Cuarto Poder*. No charge of this kind can be brought against *La Espuma*. It is closely studied from life, and is careful not to affront the modesty of nature, which loves an occasional tragic catastrophe, but loathes the artifice of a smartly constructed plot.

Of the author of so many interesting books but little has yet been told to the public. In a private letter to myself, the eminent novelist gives a brief sketch of his mode of life, so interesting that I have secured his permission to translate and print it here:—"Since my wife died," Señor Valdés writes "my life has continued to be tranquil and melancholy, dedicated to work and to my son. During the winters, I live in Asturias, and during the summers, in Madrid. I like the company of men of the world better than that of literary folks because the former teach me more. I am given up to the study of metaphysics. I have a passion for physical exercises for gymnastics, for fencing, and I try to live in an evenly balanced temper, nothing being so repugnant to me as affectation and emphasis. I find a good deal of pleasure in going to bull-fights (although I do not take my son to the Plaza dressed up like a miniature *torero*, as an American writer declares I do), and I cultivate the theatre, because to see life from the stage point of view helps me in the composition of my stories."

EDMUND GOSSE.

FROTH

CHAPTER I.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

At three in the afternoon the sun was pouring its rays on the Calle de Serrano, bathing it in bright orange light which hurt the eyes of those who went down the left-hand side where the houses stood closest. But as the cold was intense the pedestrian was not eager to cross to the other pavement in search of shade, preferring to face the sunbeams which, though blinding, were at any rate warming. At this hour, tripping slowly and daintily along, her muff of handsome otter-skin held up to shade her eyes, an elegantly dressed woman was making her way down the street, leaving behind her a wake of perfume which the shopmen standing at their doors sniffed up with enjoyment, as they gazed in rapture at the being who exhaled such a delightful fragrance.

For the Calle de Serrano, albeit the widest and handsomest in Madrid, has an essentially provincial stamp; little traffic, shops devoid of display, and dedicated for the most part to the sale of the necessaries of life, children playing in front of the houses, door-keepers seated in committee and discussing matters at the top of their voices with the unemployed butchers' boys, fishmongers, and grocers. Hence a well-dressed woman could not pass unremarked, as she might in the more central parts of the town. The glances of the

passers-by, as well as of the loungers, rested on her with pleasure; the women commented on the quality of the clothes she wore, and horrible jests were uttered by the dreadful apprentices, provoking their companions to outbursts of brutal glee. One of the most ruffianly and greasy looking threw out as she passed one of those coarse remarks which would bring the colour to the smooth cheek of an English Miss, and make her call the policeman, and almost exact an apology. But our valiant Spanish lady, her soul above prudery, did not even wince, but went on her triumphant way with the dainty and hesitating step of a woman who rarely sets foot in the dust of the highway.

For that hers was a triumphant progress there could be no doubt; no one could look at her without admiration, not so much of her luxurious attire, as of the severe beauty of her face and the distinction of her figure. She was five-and-thirty at least. There was something extremely original in the type of her features. Her complexion was clear and dark, her eyes, blue, her hair coppery red. Such a strange mingling of different races is rarely seen in a face: if it showed a stronger dash of one than another, it was of the Italian. It was one of those faces which suggest an English lady burnt under a Neapolitan sun. In some of Raphael's pictures we see heads which may give some notion of our fair pedestrian.

Her predominant expression at the present moment was one of proud disdain, to which perhaps the sun contributed by making her knit her smooth and delicate brows. There was not, it must be confessed, any sweetness in this face; its firm and regular lines betrayed a haughty spirit devoid of tenderness; those blue eyes had not the limpid serenity which lends perfect harmony to a certain virginal style of countenance occasionally seen and admired in Spain, but more frequently in the north of Europe. They were made to express the tumult of vehement and violent passions, among which ardent love might, perhaps, have its turn, but never that humble and silent devotion which would consent to die unspoken.

She wore a high red hat, and a short thin veil, also red, reaching only to her lips. The hue of this veil contributed to lend her face that singular tinge which caught the eye of every one who met her. Her wrapper was a handsome fur cloak, over a dress of the same shade as her hat, with an overskirt of lace or grenadine such as was then the fashion.

She held up her muff, as has been said, to shade her eyes, and kept her eyes fixed on the ground as one who does not care to see or heed anything which may come in her way. Consequently, till she came to the Calle de Jorge Juan, she did not detect the presence of a young man, who, keeping pace with her on the opposite side of the way, gazed at her with even more admiration than curiosity. But on reaching the corner, without knowing why, she raised her head, and her eyes met those of her admirer. A very perceptible shade of annoyance clouded her face; she frowned with greater severity, and the haughty expression of her eyes was more marked than before. She walked a little faster, and, on reaching the Calle de Villanueva, she stood still, and looked down the street, hoping, no doubt, to see a tramcar. The youth dared not do the same; he went on his way, not without sending certain eager and significant glances after the graceful figure, to which she vouchsafed no notice. The car at last arrived; the lady stepped in, showing, as she did so, a pretty foot shod in a kid boot, and took her seat in the farthest corner. Finding herself safe from indiscreet observation, her eyes by degrees grew more serene, and rested with indifference on the few persons who were with her in the vehicle; still the cloud of anxious thought did not altogether disappear from her face, nor the touch of disdain which lent dignity to her beauty.

Her youthful admirer had not resigned himself to losing sight of her. He went on confidently down the Calle de Villanueva; but as the tramcar went by he nimbly caught it up, and got on the step without being observed. And contriving to place himself where the lady could not see him,

behind other persons standing on the platform, he was able to gaze at her by stealth, with an enthusiasm which would have made any looker-on smile.

For the difference between their ages was considerable. Our young friend looked about eighteen; his face was as beardless, as fresh and as rosy as a girl's, his hair red, his eyes blue, gentle, and melancholy. Though he wore an overcoat and a felt hat, his appearance was that of a gentleman; he was in the deepest mourning, which contrasted strongly with the fairness of his complexion. Under the magnetic influence of a firm gaze, which we all have experienced, our heroine ere long turned her eyes to the spot whence the young man fired darts of passionate admiration. Her face grew dark again, and her lips twitched with impatience, as though the poor boy's adoration was an aggression. And she began to show signs of feeling ill at ease in the coach, turning her pretty head now this way and now that, with an evident desire to escape. However, she did not alight till they reached the church of San José, where she stopped the car and got out, passing her persecutor with s look of proud disdain, which might have annihilated him.

He must have been a very bold man, or quite devoid of shame, to jump out after her as he did, and follow her along the Calle del Caballero de Gracia, taking the opposite side-walk to be able to stare more at his ease on the face which had so taken possession of him. The lady proceeded at a leisurely pace, and every man who passed her turned to gaze. Her step was that of a goddess who condescends to quit her throne of clouds for an hour, to rejoice and fascinate mortal men, who, as they behold her, are enraptured and stumble in their walk.

"Merciful Virgin, what a woman!" exclaimed a young officer in a loud voice, clinging to his companion as if he were about to faint with surprise.

The fair one could not help smiling very slightly, and the flash of that smile seemed to light up her exceptional loveliness.

Presently two gentlemen in an open carriage bowed respectfully to her, and she responded with an almost imperceptible nod. When she reached the corner where the streets part by San Luis she hesitated and paused, looking in every direction, and again catching sight of the red-haired youth, she turned her back on him with marked contempt, and went on at a more rapid pace down the Calle de la Montera, where her appearance caused the same excitement in the passers-by. Three or four times she stopped in front of the shop windows, though evidently she did so less out of curiosity than in consequence of the nervous state into which the youth's unrelenting pursuit had plunged her.

Near the Puerta del Sol, to avoid him no doubt, she made up her mind to go into Marbini's jewel shop. Seating herself with an air of indifference, she raised her veil a little, and began to examine without much attention the latest importations in gems which the shopman displayed before her. She could not have done worse by way of releasing herself from the observations of her boyish admirer, since he could pursue them at his leisure and with the greatest ease through the plate glass windows, and did so with a persistency which enraged her more and more every minute.

In point of fact, the elegantly decorated shop, glittering in every corner with precious stones and metals, was a worthy shrine for her beauty, the setting best fitted for so delicate a gem. And so the youth was thinking, to judge from the impassioned ecstasy of his eyes and the statue-like fixity of his attitude. At last, unable any longer to control her irritation, the lady abruptly rose, and with a brief "Good morning" to the attendant, who treated her with extraordinary deference, she quitted the shop, and set off as fast as she could walk, towards the Puerta del Sol.

Here she stopped; then she went a little way towards a hackney cab, as though intending to take it; but, suddenly changing her mind, she turned with a determined step towards the Calle Mayor, still escorted by the youth at no great distance.

Half-way down the street she vanished into a handsome house, not without sending a hasty but furious glance at her follower, who took it with perfect and wonderful coolness. The porter who was standing in the portico, gravely clipping his bushy black whiskers, hastily pulled off his braided cap, made her a low bow, and flew to open the glass door to the staircase, pressing, as he did so, the button of an electric bell. She slowly mounted the carpeted steps, and by the time she reached the first floor the door was already open, and a servant in livery was awaiting her.

The house was that of the Excellentisimo Señor Don Julian Calderón, the head of the banking firm of Calderón Brothers, who occupied the whole of the first floor, with a staircase apart from that which led to the rest of the apartments, let to other persons. This Calderón was the son of another Calderón, well known, in the commercial circles of Madrid, as a wholesale importer of hides and leather, by which he had made a good fortune, and in the later years of his life he had greatly augmented it by devoting himself, not to trade alone, but also to circulating and discounting bills of exchange. He being dead, his son Julian followed in his footsteps, without deviating from them in any particular, managing with his own property that of his two sisters—both married, one to a medical man, and the other to a landowner of La Mancha. He, too, had been married for some years to the daughter of a wealthy merchant of Zaragoza, Don Tomas Osorio by name; the father of the well-known Madrid banker, whose house in the Salamanca quarter of the town, Calle de D. Ramon de la Cruz, was kept upon a princely footing. The handsome lady who had just entered the Calderón's house was this banker's wife, and consequently the sister-in-law of Señora de Calderón.

She passed in front of the servant without waiting to be announced, walking on as one who had a right there; crossed three or four large, elegantly decorated rooms, and, pulling aside with her own hand the rich velvet curtain with its em-

broidered fringing, entered a much smaller drawing-room where several persons were sitting.

In the seat nearest to the fire reclined the mistress of the house; a woman of some forty years, stout, with regular features, and large black eyes, but devoid of sparkle; her skin was fair, her hair chestnut, and remarkably soft and fine. By her, in a low easy chair, sat another lady, a complete contrast in every respect; brunette, slight, delicate, and full of excessive vivacity, not only in her keen, bright eyes, but in her whole person. This was the Marquesa de Alcudia, of one of the first families in Spain. The three young girls, who sat in a row on straight chairs, were her daughters, all very like her in physique though they did not imitate her restlessness, but remained motionless and silent, their eyes cast down with such an affectation of modesty and composure that it was easy to see in what severe order they were kept by their lively and nervous mamma. To one of them every now and then the daughter of the house spoke in an undertone. She was a child of thirteen or fourteen, with round cheeks, small eyes, a turn-up nose, and scars in the throat which argued a delicate constitution. Her hair was plaited into a long tail tied at the end with a ribbon, as was that of the youngest Alcudia, with whom she carried on a subdued and intermittent conversation. This young lady and her sisters wore fanciful hats, all alike, while Esperanza Calderón sat with her little round head uncovered, and wore a blue morning frock much too short for a girl of her age.

Facing the Señora, and lounging, like her, in an arm-chair, was General Patiño, Conde de Morillejo. He was between fifty and sixty years of age, but his eyes sparkled with all the fire of youth; his grey hair was carefully dressed, and large moustaches à la Victor Emmanuel, a pointed beard and aquiline nose, gave him a gallant and attractive appearance. He was the ideal of a veteran aristocrat. By him sat Calderón, a man of about fifty, stout, with a fat florid face, graced with short grey whiskers, his eyes round, vacant, and dull. Not far from him was an elderly woman, his mother-in-law, but quite unlike

her daughter in face and figure; so thin, that she was no more than skin and bone, dark, and with deep-set, penetrating eyes, every feature stamped with intelligence and decision. Talking to her was Pinedo, the occupant of the third-floor rooms. His moustache showed no grey hairs, but it was easy to see that it was dyed; his face was that of a man verging on the sixties; a good-humoured face too, with prominent eyes full of eager movement—those of an observant character; he was dressed with care and elegance, his whole person exquisitely clean.

On seeing the beautiful lady in the doorway, the whole party showed some excitement; all rose, excepting the mistress of the house, on whose placid face a faint smile of pleasure showed dimly.

"Ah! Clementina! What a miracle to see you here!"

The lady in question went forward with a smile, and, while she embraced the ladies and shook hands with the gentlemen, she replied to her sister-in-law's affectionate reproach.

"Come, come. Fit the cap to your own head—you who never come to my house above once in six months."

"I have my children to think of, my dear."

"What an excuse; I ask you! I, too, have children."

"Yes, at Chamartin."

"Well, but having sons does not hinder you from going to the opera or out driving."

Clementina seated herself between her sister-in law and the Marquesa de Alcudia; the rest resumed their seats.

"Oh, my dear!" Señora de Calderón went on, "if you could have seen what a cold I caught at the play the other night. It was all the fault of that goose Ramon Maldonado; with all his bowing and scraping he could not manage to shut the door of the box. The draught pierced my very bones."

"Happy was that draught!" remarked General Patiño with a gallant smile.

Every one else smiled, excepting the lady addressed, who gazed at him in amazement, opening her eyes very wide.

"How—happy?" said she.

The General had to explain that it was a covert compliment, and not till then did she reward him with a smile.

"And was not Gayarre delightful?" said Clementina.

"Admirable, as he always is," replied Señora de Calderón.

"He seems to me to want style of manner," the General suggested.

"Oh no, General, I beg your pardon——" And they went off into a discussion as to whether the famous tenor had or had not the actor's art, whether he dressed well or ill. The ladies were all on his side; the men were against him.

From the tenor they went on to the soprano.

"She is altogether charming," said the General, with the confidence and conviction of a connoisseur

"Oh! delicious," exclaimed Calderón.

"Well, for my part I regard the Tosti as extremely commonplace. Do you not think so, Clementina?"

Clementina agreed.

"Do not say so, pray, Marquesa," the General hastened to put in, glancing as he spoke at Señora de Calderón. "The mere fact that a woman is tall and stout does not make her commonplace if she holds herself proudly and has a distinguished manner."

"I do not say so, General; do not make such a mistake," replied the Marquesa, with some vehemence. But she proceeded to criticise the grace and fine figure of the soprano with much humour and some little temper.

The argument became general, and the issue proved the reverse of the former discussion; the men were favourable to the actress and the ladies adverse. Pinedo summed up by saying in a grave and solemn tone, which, however, betrayed some covert meaning, "A fine figure is more essential to a woman than to a man."

Clementina and the General exchanged significant glances. The Marquesa frowned sternly at the dandy, and then hastily looked at her daughters, who sat with their eyes downcast, in the same rigid and expressionless attitude as before. Pinedo

himself was quite unmoved, as though he had said the most natural thing in the world.

"For my part, friend Pinedo, it seems to me that a man too should have a good figure," said slow-witted Señora de Calderón.

As she spoke a faint gasp was heard as of laughter hardly controlled. It was the youngest of the Alcudia girls, at whom her mother shot a pulverising look, and the damsel's face immediately resumed its original expression of timidity and propriety.

"That is a matter of opinion," replied Pinedo with a respectful bow.

This Pinedo, who occupied one of the apartments on the third floor of the house, the whole belonging to Señor de Calderón, held a place of some importance in one of the public offices. The changes of political administration did not affect his tenure; he had friends of every party, and had never thrown himself into the scale for either. He lived as a man of the world; was received at the most aristocratic houses in the metropolis; was on terms of intimacy with almost every one who figured in finance or politics; was an early member of the Savage Club (*Club de los Salvajes*), where he delighted in making fun every evening with the young aristocrats who assembled there, and who treated him with a familiarity which not rarely degenerated into rudeness. He was a genial and intelligent man, with considerable knowledge and experience of the world; tolerant towards every form of vanity from sheer contempt for all; and nevertheless, under the exterior of a courteous and inoffensive creature, he had in the depths of his nature a power of satire which enabled him to take vengeance quite gracefully, by some incisive and opportune phrase, for the impertinence of his young friends the juveniles of the club, who professed an affection for him mingled with contempt and fear.

No one knew whence he had sprung, though it was regarded as beyond doubt that he was of humble birth. Some declared

that he was the son of a butcher at Seville; others said that in his youth he had been a waif on the beach at Malaga. All that was positively known was that, many years since, he had come to Madrid as hanger-on to an Andalucian of rank, who, after dissipating his fortune, blew his brains out. Under his protection Pinedo had made a great many useful acquaintances; he came to know and be known by everybody who was anybody, and was popular with all. He had the tact to efface himself when he crossed the path of a pompous and overbearing man, letting him pass first; he gave rise to no jealousies, and this is a certain means of exciting no hostility. At the same time his cleverness, and his caustic wit, which he always kept within certain bounds, were a constant amusement at social meetings, and sufficed to give him a certain importance which he otherwise would not have enjoyed.

His family consisted of one daughter aged eighteen, and named Pilar. His wife, whom no one had known, had died many years before. His salary amounted to forty thousand reals,* on which the father and daughter lived very thriftily in the third-floor rooms which Calderón let to them for twenty-two dollars a month. Pinedo's chief outlay was on "appearances"; that is to say, as he moved in a rank of society above his own he was obliged to dress well and frequent the theatres. Understanding the necessity for keeping up his acquaintances—the pillars on which his continuance in office rested—he indulged in such expenses without hesitation, pinching himself in other departments of domestic economy. Thus he lived in a state of stable equilibrium; his position enabled him to move in the society of the great, while they unconsciously helped to keep him in his position. No Minister could venture to dismiss a man whom he would inevitably meet at every evening party and ball in the capital. As Pinedo had occasionally had the honour of speaking with Royalty, certain sayings of his were current in fashionable drawing-rooms, where they enjoyed a fame out of all proportion to their merits,

* About £400.

since, as a rule, there is a conspicuous lack of wit in most drawing-rooms; he was a good shot with pistol or rifle, and possessed a voluminous library on the culinary arts. The very highest personages were flattered when they heard that Pinedo had praised their cook.

"How long is it since you were at the Colegio, Pacita?" asked Esperanza of the youngest de Alcudia, in an undertone.

"On Friday last. Do not you know that mamma takes us to confession every Friday? And you?"

"It is at least three weeks since I was there. Mamma and I confess once a month."

"And is Father Ortega satisfied with that?"

"He says nothing about it to me. I do not know whether he does to mamma."

"He would say nothing to her; he knows better than to put his foot in it. Have you seen the Mariani girls?"

"Yes; I met them in the Retiro Gardens a few days ago."

"Do you know that Maria is engaged?"

"She did not tell me."

"Yes. In the cavalry, a son of Brigadier Arcos. Such a queer-looking fellow; not ugly, but his legs tremble when he walks, as if he had just come out of the hospital. You see, as the brigadier is her mamma's most devoted—it is all in the family."

"And you? Do you keep it up with your cousin?"

"I really cannot tell you. On Monday he went off in a huff and has not been to the house since. My cousin is not what he seems; he is no simpleton, but a very presuming fellow; if you give him an inch he takes an ell. If I did not keep a very sharp look out there is no knowing to what lengths he would go at the pace he makes. Do you know that the other day he insisted on kissing me?"

Esperanza gazed at her, smiling and curious. Pacita put her mouth close to Esperanza's ear and whispered a few words.

"Mercy!" exclaimed the girl, turning scarlet.

"As I tell you, child. Of course I told him he was a horrid wretch, and I would not touch him with a pair of tongs. He went off very much nettled, but he will come back."

"Your cousin rides very well. I saw him on horseback yesterday."

"It is the only thing he can do. Books make him idiotic. He has been examined six times already in Roman law, and has failed to pass every time."

"What does that matter!" exclaimed Esperanza, with a scorn which might have made Heinecius turn in his grave. And she went on, "Did Madame Clément make those hats?"

"No. Mamma had them bought in Paris by Señora de Carvajal, who arrived on Saturday."

"They are very pretty."

"Yes, prettier than any Madame Clément makes."

Little Esperanza de Calderón, though plain enough, was nevertheless not without attractions, consisting partly perhaps in her youth, and partly in her mouth, on which, with its full fresh lips and even white teeth, sensuality had already set its seal. The youngest of the Alcudias was a delicate creature, all bones and eyes.

At this point another lady was shown in—a woman of forty or more, pretty still, though painted, and marked with lines left by a life of dissipation rather than by years.

"Here is Pepa Frias," said Mariana—the Señora de Calderón—with a smile.

"Quite right; here is Pepa Frias," said the lady so named, with an affectation of bad humour. "A woman who is not in the very least ashamed to set foot in this house." The company all laughed.

"You would suppose by my appearance that I had come out of the workhouse? That I had no home of my own? But I have. Calle de Salesas, Number 60—first floor. That is to say, the landlord has—but I pay him, which is more than all your tenants do, I am very sure. Oh! Pinedo, I beg your pardon, I did not see you. And I am at home on Saturdays

—it is not so hot as you are here, oof! And I give chocolate and tea and conversation and everything—just as you do here."

And while she spoke she went from one to another shaking hands with a look of fury. But as every one knew her for an oddity they took it as a joke and laughed.

She was a woman of substantial build, her hair artificially red, her eyes rather prominent, but handsome, her lips rosy and sensual—a decidedly attractive woman, in short, who had had, and, in spite of advancing years, still had, many devoted admirers.

"What there is not at my house," she went on to Señora de Calderón, giving her a sounding kiss on each cheek, "is a woman so graceless and so insignificant as you. For, of course, I am not come to see you, but my dear Señor Don Julian, who now and then comes to wish me good evening, and tell me the latest prices of stocks. And *à propos* to prices, Clementina, tell your husband to hold his hand till I give him notice. No, you had better say nothing about it. I will call at your house this evening."

"But, child, how you are always loaded with papers about shares and stocks!" exclaimed Mariana.

"And so would you be if you had not such an energetic husband, who heats his head over them that you may keep yours cool and easy.

"Come, come, Pepa, do not be calling me names, or you will make me blush," said Calderón.

"I am saying no more than the truth. You may imagine that it is pure joy to be always thinking whether shares are going up or down, and writing letters and endorsements, and walking to and from the bank."

"I imagine, Pepa," said the General, with a gallant smile, "that, from all I hear, you have a perfect talent for business."

"You imagine! That is an event!"

"I have not so much imagination as you, but I have some," retorted the General, somewhat put out by the laugh Pepa's speech had raised.

Pepa enjoyed the reputation in society of being a very funny person, though, in fact, her wit was hardly to be distinguished from audacity. Speaking always with an affectation of anger, calling things bluntly by their names, however coarse they might be, saying the most insolent things without respect of persons—these were the characteristics which had won her a certain popularity. She had been left a widow while still young, with two children, a boy who had entered the navy and was at sea, and a girl who had now been married about a year. Her husband had been a merchant, and in his later years had gambled successfully on the Bourse. At that time Pepa had caught the same passion, and, as a widow, she had cultivated it. Prudence, or more probably the timidity which generally hampers a woman in such a business, had hitherto saved her from the ruin which, as a rule, inevitably overtakes gamblers. She had somewhat impaired her fortune, but still enjoyed a very enviable competency.

"Pepa, the matter is going on famously," said Pinedo. "Zaragoza wishes to have one volcano, and at Coruña the authorities have decided on making two, one on the east and one on the west of the town."

"I am glad; I am delighted. So that the shares will not be put on the market?"

"No; the syndicate has ample security that they will be at three hundred before the month is out."

The few who were in the joke laughed at this. The rest stared at them with intense curiosity.

"What is all this about volcanoes, Pepa?" asked Señora de Calderón.

"Señora, a society has been formed for establishing volcanoes in various districts."

"Indeed. And of what use are volcanoes?"

"For warming, and as decorative objects."

Every one understood the joke excepting the lymphatic mistress of the house, who still inquired into the details of the

affair with continued interest, her friends laughing till Calderón, half amused and half annoyed, exclaimed:

"Why, my dear, do not be so simple. Do you not see that it is a joke between Pepa and Pinedo?"

The couple protested, affecting the greatest gravity. But Pepa whispered in her friend's ear: "Mariana is such a simpleton that for the last three months that carpet-knight, the General, has been making love to her and she has never found it out."

Pepa was not far wrong in styling General Patiño a carpet knight. In spite of his swagger, his somewhat damaged features and his martial airs, Patiño was but a sham veteran. He had got his promotion without losing a drop of blood—first as military instructor to one of the princes, then as member of various scientific committees, and finally as holding a place under the Minister of War; cultivating the favour of political personages; returned as deputy several times; senator at last and a member of the Supreme Court of Naval and Military Jurisdiction, he had never been on the field of battle excepting in pursuit of a revolutionary general, and then with the firm determination never to come up with him.

As he had travelled a little and boasted of having seen every implement in the arts of war, he passed for an accompished soldier. He subscribed to two or three scientific reviews; when his profession was under discussion he would quote a few German authorities, and he spoke in an emphatic tone and a deep chest voice which impressed his audience. But in fact the reviews were always left to lie open on his table, and the German names, though correctly pronounced, were no more than empty sounds to him. He piqued himself on being a soldier of the modern school, and for this reason he was never seen in his uniform. He was fond of the arts, especially of music, and was a regular subscriber to the Opera House and the Conservatorium Quartetts. He was fond of flowers, too, and of women—more especially of his neighbour's wife; insatiable in tasting the fruits of other men's gardens. His

life glided on in simple contentment, in watering the gardenias in his little garden—Calle de Ferraz—and making love to his friends' wives.

This he did as one who makes it his business, and in the most business-like way. He devoted all his mind to it, and all the powers of his considerable intelligence, as a man must who means to achieve anything great or profitable in thi world. His strategical knowledge, which he had never had occasion to display in the battle-field, served him a good turn in storming the fair ones of the metropolis. First he established a blockade with languishing glances, appearing at the theatre, in the parks, in the churches frequented by the lady; where-ever she went Patiño's shining new hat, gleaming in the air, proclaimed the ardent and respectful passion of its owner. Then he narrowed the *cordon*, making himself intimate in the house, bringing bonbons to the children, buying them toys and picture-books, taking them out to breakfast occasionally and bribing the servants by opportune gifts. Then came the attack; by letter or by word of mouth. And here our General displayed a daring, an intrepidity, which contrasted splendidly with the prudence and skill of the siege. Such a combination of talents have always characterised the great captains of the world: Alexander, Cæsar, Hernan Cortés, Napoleon.

Years did not avail to cool his ardour for great enterprises, nor to diminish his extraordinary faculties; or, to be accurate, what he lost in energy he gained in art; thus the balance was preserved in this privileged nature. But since fortune—as many philosophers have taught us—refuses her aid to the old, in spite of his skill the General had of late experienced certain repulses which he could not ascribe to any defect of foresight or courage, but only to the vagaries of fate. Two young wives in succession had snubbed him severely. But, as is always the case with men of real genius, in whom reverses do not produce any womanly weakness, but, on the contrary, only prompt them to concentrate and brace their spirit and power,

Patiño did not weep like Augustus over his legions. But he meditated, and meditated long. And his meditations were rich in results; a new scheme of tactics, wonderful as all his schemes were, rose up from the labour of his lofty thoughts. Taking stock very accurately of his means of attack, and calculating with admirable precision the amount of resistance which the fair foe could offer, he perceived that he could no longer besiege new citadels, where the fortifications were always comparatively recent, but only those which, being ancient, were beginning to show weak spots. Such keen penetration in planning the attack and such skill in execution as the General could bring to bear, promised him certain victory. And in fact, as a result of this new and sure plan of action, first one and then another of the most seasoned and mature beauties of the capital surrendered to his siege, and at the feet of these silver-haired Venuses he won the reward due to his prudence and courage.

Like Hannibal of Carthage Patiño could vary his tactics as circumstances required, according to the position and temperament of the enemy. Certain strongholds demanded severity, a display of the means of coercion; in other cases craftier measures were needed, a stealthy and noiseless approach. One fair enemy preferred the martial and manly aspect of the conquering hero: she would listen with delight to the history of the famous days of Garrovillas and Jarandilla, when he was in pursuit of the rebels. Another took pleasure in hearing him discourse in his highest style of oratory and richest chest notes on political and military problems. A third, again, went into ecstasies over his interpretation of some famous melody of Mozart's or Schumann's, on the violoncello. For our hero played the 'cello remarkably well, and it must be confessed that this elegant instrument had helped him considerably in his most successful achievements. He brought out the notes in a quite irresistible manner, revealing very clearly that, in spite of his dashing and bellicose temperament, he had an impressionable heart, alive to the blandishments of love. And

lest the long-drawn notes should not express this with absolute clearness, they were corroborated by eyes upturned till they disappeared in their sockets at each impassioned or pathetic point of the melody—eyes which really could not fail of their effect on any beauty, however stony-hearted.

Pepa's malicious insinuation was not unfounded. The gallant general had for some time past been turning his guns on Señora de Calderón without her showing any signs of being aware of it. Never in the course of his many and brilliant campaigns had he met with a similar case. To bombard a citadel for several months, to pelt it with shell as big as your head—and to see it as undisturbed, as sound asleep, as though they had been pellets of paper! When the General came out, point-blank, with some perfervid address Mariana smiled complacently.

"Hush, wretch! A nice specimen you must have been in your day!"

Patiño would bite his lips with annoyance. In his day! He who fancied his day was still at its noon! But his amazing diplomatic talent enabled him to dissimulate, and smile in bland reply.

"How much did you give for that bracelet?" Pacita inquired of Esperanza, who was wearing a very pretty and fanciful trinket.

"The General gave it me a few days ago."

"Indeed! The General evidently makes you a great many presents then?" said her friend, with a slightly ironical tone which the girl did not understand.

"Oh, yes. He is very kind. He is always giving us things. He gave my little sister a beautiful locket to wear at her neck."

"And does he make presents to your mamma?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"And what does your papa say?"

"Papa!" exclaimed Esperanza, opening her eyes in surprise. "What should he say?"

Pacita, without replying, called the attention of one of her sisters.

"Mercedes, look what a pretty bracelet the General has given to Esperanza."

The second of the Alcudias abandoned her rigidity for a moment, and taking Esperanza's arm examined the bracelet with interest.

"It is very pretty. And the General gave you that?" she asked, exchanging a meaning glance with her sister.

"Here comes Ramoncito," said Esperanza, looking towards the door.

"Ah! Ramoncito Maldonado."

A tall young man, slight and thin, very pale, with black whiskers which encroached on his nose, in the style adopted by his Majesty the King, and, following his example, by many of the youthful aristocracy, came into the room with a smile and proceeded to greet the company without any sign of shyness, taking their hands with a slight shake, and pressing them to his breast in the affected style which, a few years since, was the correct thing among the coxcombs of Madrid society. As he came in he filled the room with some penetrating scent.

"Heavens, what a poisonous atmosphere!" Pepa exclaimed in an undertone, after shaking hands with him. "What a puppy that fellow is!"

"Hallo! Old boy!" exclaimed this youngster, coolly taking Pinedo by the beard. "What were you doing yesterday? Pepe Castro called on you——"

"Pepe Castro called on me! So much honour overwhelms me!"

Such familiarity on Maldonado's part to a man already of mature age and venerable appearance was somewhat startling. But all the gilded youth of the Savage Club treated Pinedo in the same way without his taking offence at it.

"And here is Mariana," Pinedo went on, "who has just been abusing you; and with reason."

"Indeed."

"Do not believe him, Ramoncito," exclaimed Señora de Calderón, much surprised.

"Oh, and Pepa too."

"You, Pepa?" asked the youth, trying to appear indifferent, but in fact somewhat uneasy; for Pepa de Frias was very generally feared, and not without cause.

"I? Oh yes, and I will have it out with you. What do you mean by soaking yourself with scent? Do you hope to subdue us all through our olfactory organs?"

"I only wish I could subdue you through any organ, Pepa."

The retort was generally acceptable. There was a spontaneous burst of laughter, led by Pacita. Her mother bit her lip with rage and whispered to the daughter next her to tell the second, to communicate to the youngest that she was a shameless minx, and that she would hear more of it when she got home.

"Well said, boy! Shake hands on it!" exclaimed Pepa, holding out her hand to Ramoncito. "That is the first sensible speech I ever heard you make. Generally you only talk nonsense."

"Thank you very much."

"There is nothing to thank me for."

"We have just read the question you put in the Assembly, Ramoncito," said Señora de Calderón, trying by amiability to discredit Pinedo's accusation.

"Pshaw! Half a dozen words!"

"Every one must make a beginning, young man," said Calderón, with a patronising air.

"No, no. That is not the way to begin," said Pinedo, gravely, "You begin by dissentient murmurs; next come interruptions —"That is inaccurate; prove it, prove it; you are misinformed"—"Then you go on to appeals and questions. Next comes the explaining of your own vote, or the defence of some incidental motion. Finally a speech on some great financial question. So you see Ramon is at the third stage, that of appeals and questions."

"Thanks, Pinedito, thanks!" replied the young man, somewhat piqued. "Then, having reached that stage, I appeal to you not to be so devilish clever."

"I declare! That too is not so bad," exclaimed Señora de Frias in a tone of surprise. "Why Ramoncito, you are sparkling with wit!"

The youthful deputy found himself a seat between the daughter of the house and Pacita de Alcudia who parted reluctantly to make room for his chair. Maldonado, a man of good family, not altogether devoid of fortune, and recently elected member of the Chamber, had for some time been paying his addresses to Esperanza de Calderón. It was in the opinion of their friends a very suitable match. Esperanza would be richer than Ramoncito, since Don Julian's business was soundly established on an extensive scale; still, the young man, who was by no means a beggar, had begun his political career with credit. The young girl's parents neither opposed nor encouraged his advances—Calderón, with the dignity and superiority which money gives, hardly troubled himself as to who might profess an attachment to his daughter, satisfied with the certainty that when the time came for marrying her she would have no lack of suitors. Indeed, five or six young fellows of the most elegant and superfine society in Madrid buzzed in the parks, at evening parties, and at the theatre, round the wealthy heiress, like drones round a beehive.

Ramon had many rivals, some of them men of position, But this did not trouble him so greatly as that the damsel, by nature so subdued, and usually so silent and shy, with him was saucy and at her ease, allowing herself sundry more or less harmless little jests, and blunt answers, and grimaces, which amply proved that she did not take him seriously. And for this reason, Pepe Castro, his friend and confidant, constantly told him that he should make himself more scarce, that he should seem less eager and less anxious, that a woman was the better for being treated with a little contempt.

Now Pepe Castro was not merely his friend and confidant, but his model for every action of social or private life. The verdicts he pronounced on persons, horses, politics—of which however he rarely spoke at all—shirts and walking-sticks were to the young deputy incontrovertible axioms. He copied his dress, his walk, his laugh. If Castro appeared on a Spanish mare, Ramon sold his English cob to buy such another as his friend's; if he took to a military salute, raising his hand to the side of his head, in a few days Ramon saluted like a recruit; if he set up a flirtation with a shop-girl, it was not long before our youth was haunting the low quarters of the city, in search of her fellow. Pepe Castro combed all his hair forward to hide a patch that was prematurely bald; Ramon, who had a fine head of hair, also combed his hair forward; nay, he would very willingly have imitated the baldness to appear more *chic*.

However, in spite of all this devout imitation of his model, he could not obey him in the matter of his incipient passion. And for this reason: strange as it may seem, Ramoncito was beginning really to care for the girl. Love is but rarely a single-minded impulse; various other passions often contribute to suggest it and vivify it: vanity, avarice, sensuality, and ambition. Still it is hardly to be distinguished from the real thing; it inspires the same watchful care, and causes the same doubts and torments; the touch-stone lies in unselfishness and constancy. Else it is very easy to mistake them. Ramon believed himself to be sincerely in love with Esperanza, and perhaps he was justified, for he admired her and thought of her night and day, he sought every opportunity of pleasing her, and hated his rivals mortally. However he might try to follow the advice of the infallible Pepe and to conceal his devotion, or at any rate the ardour of his feelings, he could not succeed. He had begun to court her out of self-interest with all the unconcern of a man whose heart is free, and the young lady's disdainful indifference had quickly brought him to thinking of her constantly, and feeling himself confused and fascinated in her presence. Then the rivalry of other suitors had fired his

blood and his desire to win her hand as soon as possible. And in deference to the truth it must be said that he had *almost* forgotten Calderón's thousands, and was *almost* disinterested in his attachment.

"So you really made a speech in the Chamber, Ramon?" asked Pacita. "And what did you say?"

"Nothing! Half a dozen words about the service of the bridges," replied the young man, with an air of affected modesty.

"Can ladies go to the Chamber?"

"Why not?"

"Because I should so much like to hear a debate one day. And Esperanza, too, I am sure."

"No, no. Not I," Esperanza hastily put in.

"Nonsense, child; do not make any pretence. Do not you want to hear your lover speak?"

Esperanza turned as red as a poppy and burst out: "I have no lover, and do not wish for one."

Ramon, too, coloured scarlet.

"Paz, what horrible things you say," Esperanza went on, in indignant confusion. "If you say any such thing again I will go away and leave you."

"I beg your pardon, my dear," said the malicious little thing, enchanted at having put her friend and the deputy to such confusion. "I quite thought—so many people say—Well, if it is not Ramon it is Federico."

Maldonado frowned.

"Neither Federico nor any one else. Leave me in peace. Look, here comes Father Ortega. Get up!"

CHAPTER II.

MORE OF THE ACTORS.

A TALL priest, still young, with a full, pale face, blue eyes, and the vague gaze of short sight, was standing in the doorway. Every one rose. The Marquesa was the first to come forward and kiss his hand. After her, her daughters did the same, and then Mariana and the other ladies.

"Good-evening, Father." "Delighted to see you, Father." "Sit here, Father." "No, no, not there; come near the fire, Father."

The men shook hands with him affectionately and respectfully. The priest's voice, as he returned their greetings, was sweet and very low, as though there were a sick person in the adjoining room; his smile was grave, patronising, and insinuating. He had an air of having been dragged from his cell and his books with extreme difficulty—of coming hither much against his will, simply to do some good to the Calderóns, whose spiritual director he was, by the mere contact of his learned and virtuous person. His clothes and robe were fine and well cut; his shoes of patent leather with silver buckles; his stockings of silk.

Every one complimented him enthusiastically on a sermon he had delivered the day before at the Oratory Del Caballero de Gracia. He merely smiled, and murmured sweetly: "I am only glad, ladies, if you derived any benefit from it."

Padre Ortega was no common priest—at any rate, in the opinion of the fashionable society of the metropolis, among

whom he had a large following. Without being a meddler, he was a constant guest in the houses of persons of distinction. He did not love to make a noise, or attract the attention of the company to himself; he neither made jokes nor allowed joking; he had none of the frank, gossiping temper which is commonly found in those priests who are addicted to social intercourse. If he had any love of intrigue it must have been of a different type to that usually seen in the world. Discreet and affable, modest, grave, and silent in society, effacing himself completely and mingling with the crowd, he stood out in full relief when he mounted the pulpit, as he very frequently did. Then he expressed himself with amazing ease and fluency; he did not move his audience to emotion, and never attempted it, but he displayed very remarkable talents, and a distinction rare among his order.

For he was one of those very few ecclesiastics who are—or who at any rate seem to be—up to the mark of modern science. Instead of the moral platitudes, the empty and absurd declamation, which are hurled by his brethren against science and logic, his sermons boldly rose to the level of the literature of the day; he invariably ended by proving directly or indirectly that there is no essential incompatibility between the advance of science and the dogmas of the Church. He would discourse of evolution, of transmutation, of the struggle for existence; would quote Hegel sometimes, allude to the Malthusian theory of population, to the antagonism of Labour and Capital; and from each in turn would deduce something in support of Catholic doctrine; to meet new modes of attack new weapons must be employed. He even confessed himself an advocate, in principle, of Darwin's theories—a fact which surprised and alarmed some of his more timid friends and penitents, although at the same time it enhanced their respect and admiration. When he addressed himself to women only, he avoided all erudition which might bore them, adopted a worldly tone, spoke of their little parties and balls, their dress and their fashions like an adept, and drew similes and argu-

ments from social life. This delighted his fair audience, and brought them to his feet.

He was the director of many of the principal families of Madrid, and in this capacity he showed exquisite discretion and tact, treating each one with due regard to his or her temperament and past and present position. When he met with a woman like the Marquesa de Alcudia, devout, enthusiastic, and fervent, the shrewd priest pressed the keys firmly, was exacting and imperious, inquired into the smallest domestic details, and laid down the law. In the Alcudia's household not a step was taken without his sanction; and in such cases, as though he enjoyed exerting his power, he adopted a stern and grave demeanour which, under other circumstances, was quite foreign to him.

If he had to do with a family of worldlings, indifferent to the Church, he played with a lighter hand, was benign and tolerant, requiring them only to conform outwardly, and refrain from setting a bad example. He did all he could to consolidate the beautiful alliance which in our days has been concluded between religion and fashion; every day he found some new means to this end, some derived from the French, some the offspring of his own brain. On certain days of the year he would collect an evening congregation of ladies of his acquaintance in the chapel or oratory of some noble house. Then there were delightful *matinées*, when he would extemporise a prayer, some accomplished musician would play the harmonium, he himself would speak a short friendly address, and then discuss religious questions with the ladies present; those who chose might confess, and, to conclude, the party would adjourn to the dining-room, where they took tea,—and changed the subject.

When any member of one of these families died, Padre Ortega had his name inserted on the letters of formal announcement, as Spiritual Director, requesting the prayers of the faithful for the departed soul; and then he would distribute printed pamphlets of souvenirs or memoirs, with prayers in

which he besought the Supreme Redeemer, in persuasive and honeyed words, that by this or that special feature of His most Holy Passion, he would forgive Count T—— or Baroness M—— the sin of pride or avarice, or what not; but, as a rule, not the sin to which the deceased had been most prone, for the worthy father had no mind to cause a scandal or hurt the feelings of the family. He also undertook the business of arranging for the acquisition of the greatest possible number of indulgences, for the Papal benediction *in articulo mortis*, for the prayers of any particular sisterhood, and so forth. Those who were his friends and of his flock, might be quite certain of not departing for the other world unprovided with good introductions. What we do not know is how far they proved useful in the sight of God: whether He passed them with a superscription in blue pencil as an ambassador does, or whether, like the lady in the story, He asked: "And you, Padre Ortega—who introduces you?"

When he had exchanged a few polite words with every person present, with such courtesy as was due to the position of each, the Marquesa de Alcudia took possession of him, carrying him off into a corner of the room, where, seated face to face in two armchairs, they began a conversation in an undertone, as though she were making confession. The priest, his elbow resting on the arm of his seat, and his shaven chin in his hand, listened to her with downcast eyes, in an attitude of humility; now and then he put in a measured word to which the lady listened with respect and submission; though she immediately returned to the charge, gesticulating vehemently, but without raising her voice.

Soon after the ecclesiastic, a youth had made his appearance —a fat youth, very round and rosy, with little whiskers which came but just below his ears, his eyes deep set in flesh, and a fine fresh colour in his cheeks. His clothes looked too tight for him; his voice was hoarse, and he seemed to produce it with difficulty. Ramon Maldonado's face clouded over as he came in. This new-comer was the heir of the Conde de

Casa-Ramirez, and one of the suitors for the first born of the house of Calderón. Jacobo—or Cobo Ramirez, as he was generally called, was regarded as a comic personage for the same reasons as Pepa Frias, but with less foundation. He too displayed great freedom of speech, cynical disrespect of persons, even of the most respectable, and an almost incredible degree of ignorance. His jests were the coarsest and grossest which decent people could by any means endure. Sometimes, indeed, they hit the nail on the head, that is to say, he had a happy thought; but as a rule his sallies were purely and unmitigatedly indecent.

And yet the company were pleased to see him. A smile of satisfaction lighted up every face but that of Ramoncito.

"I say, Calderón," he exclaimed as he came in, without any sort of preliminary greeting; "how do you manage to have such good-looking boys for your servants? As I came in, in the dim light, by the mezzo-soprano voice I heard, I took one of them for a girl."

"Nonsense, man," said the banker, laughing.

"I tell you I did, man, not that I care if you have as many Romeos as you please. Is your friend Pinazo coming this evening?"

All understood the allusion; almost every one burst out laughing.

"No, no, he is not coming," replied Calderón, choking with laughter.

"What are they laughing at, Pacita?" asked Esperanza, in a low voice.

"I do not know," she replied with perfect sincerity, shrugging her shoulders; "Cobo has said something horrid no doubt. I will ask Julia by-and-bye; she will be sure to know."

They both looked at the eldest of the three sisters, but she sat unmoved and stiff, with downcast eyes as usual; nevertheless the corners of her mouth quivered with a faint smile of comprehension which showed that her youngest sister's confidence in her profound intuition was amply justified.

"Hallo! Ramoncillo!" said Cobo, going up to Maldonado, and patting him familiarly on the cheek. "Always the same sweet and seductive youth?"

The tone was half affectionate and half ironical, which the other took very much amiss.

"Not to compare with you: but getting on," replied Ramoncito.

"No, no, you are the beauty of the two—let these young ladies decide. You are a little too thin perhaps, especially of late, but you will double your weight as soon as you have got over this."

"I have nothing to get over. And after all, no one can run to as many pounds as you," retorted Ramon, much nettled.

"You have more graces."

"Come, that will do; do not come talking such nonsense here, for it is very bad form, especially in the presence of these young ladies."

"Why must you two always be quarrelling?" exclaimed Pepa Frias. "Have done with this squabbling, or the world will not be wide enough to hold you both."

"No, the place that is not wide enough for these two, is Calderón's house," said Pinedo, in an undertone.

"Nothing of the kind," Cobo exclaimed, in a cheerful voice; "friends who quarrel are the best friends—eh old fellow?"

And taking Ramoncito's head between his hands, he shook it affectionately. Maldonado pushed him away crossly.

"Have done, have done; you are too rough."

Cobo and Maldonado were intimate friends. They had known each other from infancy, they had been at school together; then in the world of fashion they had kept up a close acquaintance, chiefly at the club which both frequented regularly. As they followed the same profession, that, namely, of "men about town," on horseback, on foot, or in a carriage, as they visited the same houses, and met everywhere and every day, their mutual confidence was unlimited. At the same time, they were always on terms of mild hostility, for

Cobo had a true contempt for Ramon, and Ramon, suspecting the fact, was constantly on his guard. This hostility did not exclude liking; they were insolent to each other, and would quarrel for hours on end, but afterwards they would drive out together, just as if nothing had occurred, and arrange to meet at the theatre. Maldonado took everything Cobo said quite seriously, and Cobo delighted in contradicting him whenever he spoke, till he had succeeded in putting him out of patience.

But all affection vanished from the moment when they had both cast their eyes on Esperanza de Calderón; hostility alone remained. Their relations were apparently the same as before, they met every day at the club, often walked out, and went hunting together, but at the bottom of their hearts they hated each other. Each spoke ill of the other behind his back; Cobo, of course, with more wit than Ramon, because, with or without good reason, he had a real and sincere contempt for his rival.

"Come, you are just like my daughter and her husband," said Senora de Frias.

"Not so bad, not so bad, Pepa!" Ramirez put in, with affected horror.

"What a shameless fellow you are!" exclaimed the lady, trying to control her laughter, which ill-matched her affectation of wrath. "They are just like you two, for they are always squabbling and making it up again."

And then she went on to describe in racy terms her daughter's married life. She and her husband alike were a couple of children, dear children, but quite insupportable. If he did not hand her a dish as quickly as she expected, or had not poured her out a glass of water; if his shirt-buttons were off, or his clothes not brushed; or if there was too much oil in the salad, there were frightful rows. They were both equally susceptible and touchy. Sometimes they did not exchange a word for a week at a time, and to carry on the affairs of life they would write little notes to each other in the most distant terms: "Asuncion has asked me to go with her to the play at eight

o'clock. Is there any objection to my going?" she would write, and leave the note on his study-table.

"You may go wherever you choose," he would reply in the same way.

"What will you have for dinner, to-morrow; do you like pickled tongue?"

"You ought to know by this time that I never eat tongue. Do me the favour to order the cook to get some fish; but not fresh anchovies, as we had them the other day; and desire her not to burn the fritters."

Neither of them chose to give way to the other, so that this nonsense would go on indefinitely, till she, Pepa, took them both by the ears, gave them a piece of her mind and obliged them to make it up. Then they went to the other extreme in their reconciliation.

"Do you know, Pepa, that I should not care to be there at the moment of reconciliation?" said Cobo, with another outburst of malignant vulgarity.

"Nor I, my friend," she replied with a sigh of resignation, that was very laughable. "But, what can I do? I am a mother-in law, which is the lowest function one can fill in this world, and I must endure that penance and many more of which you know nothing."

"I can imagine them."

"You cannot possibly imagine them."

"But then, my dear, it would be a great joy to me, to see my children friends once more," said the gentle Mariana, in her slow, drawling, lethargic way. "There is nothing more odious than a quarrelsome couple."

"And to me, too—when the scene is over," replied Pepa, exchanging smiles with Cobo Ramirez and Pinedo.

"How gladly would I make friends with you, Mariana, on the same terms," said the insinuating general, in a low voice, taking advantage of a moment when Calderón's wife stooped down to stir the fire with an enamelled iron poker. At the same time, as if he wished to take it from her, and save her

the trouble, the General's fingers were laid on the lady's, and without exceeding the truth, may be said to have lightly pressed them.

"Make friends?" said she, in her usual voice. "But first we should have to quarrel, and thank God we have not done that."

The old beau did not venture to reply; he laughed awkwardly with an uneasy glance at Calderón. If he persisted, this simpleton was capable of repeating aloud the audacious speech he had just made.

"Of course," Pepa went on, "I interfere as little as possible in their disputes. I hardly ever go to their house even—Pah! I loathe playing the part of mother-in-law."

"Well, Pepa, I only wish you were my mother-in-law," said Cobo, with a meaning look into her eyes.

"Good! I will tell my daughter; she will be much flattered."

"No, it has nothing to do with your daughter! It is that—that I should like you to interfere in my concerns."

"Stuff and nonsense! Cease your compliments," replied the lady, half vexed. But a symptom of a smile which curled her lips showed nevertheless that the speech had pleased her.

Ramoncito now brought the conversation back to the opera—the hare which runs in every fashionable meeting in Madrid. The opera is, indeed, to the subscribers, no mere amusement, but an institution. It is not, however, a love of music which makes it a constant subject of discussion, but the fact that they have nothing else to think about. To Ramoncito Maldonado, to Señora de Calderón, and to hundreds of others, the world is divided into two classes: those who subscribe to the opera and those who do not. The former alone really and completely represent the essential part of humanity.

Gayarre and Tosti once more came under discussion. Those of the party who had just come in gave their opinion on the merits as well as on the physical advantages or defects of the two singers.

Ramoncito began to tell Esperanza and Paz in a low voice how that he had last evening been presented to La Tosti in her dressing-room. A very amiable and refined woman; she had received him with wonderful graciousness and friendliness. She had heard much of him—Ramoncito—and had been most anxious to know him personally. When she was told that he was a member of the Assembly she was amazed to think of his having risen to such a position while still so young. "So absurd you know; it would seem that in other countries it is the custom only to elect old men.—She is even handsomer near than from a distance—a skin like velvet, exquisite teeth; then a splendid figure—a noble bust, and such arms!"

Vanity had made the young man not only a blunderer—for it is a well-known rule that in courting one woman it is never wise to praise another too vehemently—but a little over free in speaking to two such young girls. They looked at each other and smiled; their eyes sparkling with mischievous fun, which the young deputy did not detect.

"And tell me now, Ramon, did you not make her a declaration on the spot?" Pacita inquired.

"Certainly not," replied he, seeing through the ironical meaning of the question.

"Then you will."

"Never! I love another lady." And as he spoke he shot a languishing glance at Esperanza. The young girl suddenly turned serious.

"Really? Tell me, tell me——."

"It is a secret."

"Well, we can keep a secret. You will not tell, will you, Esperanza?"

And the mischievous little thing looked slily at her friend, enjoying her vexation and Ramoncito's discomfiture.

"I do not want to know anything about it."

"There, Ramon, do you hear? Esperanza does not want to hear anything about your love affairs. I know why, though I shall not say."

"What a silly thing you are, child," exclaimed Esperanza, now really angry.

The young man, flattered by these hints from an intimate friend, nevertheless thought it well to change the subject, for he saw that Esperanza was seriously annoyed.

"But you must not believe that it would be so very difficult to make a declaration to La Tosti, and for her to respond to it. Ask Pepe Castro; you can depend on what he says about it."

"But Pepe Castro is not you," said Esperanza, with marked disdain.

Maldonado fell from the celestial spaces where he had been soaring. This pointed speech, uttered in a tone of contempt, touched him to the quick. For, as it happened, the transcendent superiority of Pepe Castro was one of the few truths which dwelt in his mind as absolutely indisputable. There might be doubts as to Homer's, but as to Pepito's—none. The certainty of never rising, however much he might try, to the supreme height of elegance, indifference, contempt, and sovereign scorn of all creation, which characterised his admired friend, humiliated him and made him miserable.

Esperanza had laid her finger on the wound which was threatening his existence. He could not reply; the shock was so great.

Clementina was depressed and uneasy. As soon as she had entered her sister-in-law's drawing-room, she had sought a pretext for leaving; but she could find none. She was compelled to let some little time elapse; the minutes seemed ages. She had chatted for a few moments with the Marquesa de Alcudia, but that lady had quitted her when Father Ortega had come in. Her sister was appropriated by General Patiño, who was giving her an elaborate account of the mode of rearing and feeding nightingales in captivity. The two Alcudia girls, who sat next to her, might have been wax dolls, they were so stiff and motionless, answering only in monosyllables to the few questions she addressed to them. By degrees a sort of obscure irritation took possession of her; to a woman of her

temperament it was a matter of minutes only before she would cast all conventionality to the winds and take an abrupt departure. But on hearing the name of Pepe Castro, she looked up eagerly, and listened with keen interest. At Ramoncito's abrupt allusion to him she suddenly turned pale; however, she immediately recovered herself, and, joining in the conversation with a smile, she said: "Nay, nay, Ramon, do not be malignant. We poor women, if you begin to talk of us——!"

"I speak ill of none who do not deserve it, Clementina," replied the youth, encouraged by the rope thus thrown out for him.

"You men discuss us all. It strikes me that your friend Pepe Castro is not a man to bite his tongue out rather than sully a woman's reputation."

"But, indeed, Clementina, I never yet found him out in a falsehood. All Madrid knows him for a favourite with women."

"I cannot imagine why!" exclaimed the lady, with a disdainful pout.

"I am no connoisseur in male beauty," said the young man, laughing at his own phrase, "but everybody says that Pepito is handsome."

"Pshaw! That is a matter of individual taste. Pacita, who is his relation, will excuse me—but I, who am one of the 'everybody' do not say so."

"It is quite true," said Esperanza timidly, "that Pepito is not considered bad-looking. Besides he is very elegant and *distingué*. Do you not think so?" And she turned to Pacita, colouring slightly as she spoke. Clementina glanced at her with a penetrating and singular expression which deepened the blush.

"What are you talking about?" asked Cobo Ramirez, joining the little circle.

He hardly ever sat down. He liked wandering from group to group, breathing as hard as an ox, and firing some audacious remark at each in turn. Ramoncito's brow darkened at his

rival's approach. Cobo did not fail to perceive it and looked at him with a slight sneer.

"Well, Ramoncito? Tell me, how do you contrive to keep these ladies so well amused? I was just saying to Pepa that you really sparkle with wit."

"No, indeed. How should I sparkle when you monopolise it?" said the deputy, with some irritation.

"Well, well, my son, if you are afraid of me I will go."

An ironical smile, both bitter and triumphant, beamed on Ramoncito's sharp features. He had the enemy in a trap. It should be said that, a few days since, a learned discussion had given rise to a decision by an expert philologist that *afraid* was wrong and *afeard* alone was right.

"My dear Cobo," he exclaimed, throwing himself back in his chair and gazing at him with ironical amazement. "Before you talk in the presence of persons of quality you might learn to speak your mother-tongue. I mean—it seems to me——"

"Well?" said the other, in surprise.

"That no one now says *afraid* but *afeard*, my dear Cobo. I give you the information for your satisfaction and future guidance."

Ramon's manner as he spoke was so arrogant, and his smile so impertinent that Cobo, disconcerted for a moment, asked in a fury:

"And why afeard rather than afraid?"

"Because it is so—because I say so! That is why," replied the other, not ceasing to smile with increasing sarcasm, and casting a triumphant look at Esperanza.

The two rushed into an animated and violent discussion. Cobo held his own, maintaining with great spirit that no one ever said *afeard*, that he had never heard the word in his life, and that he was in the habit of talking to educated persons. The young and scented deputy answered him briefly, still smiling impertinently, and sure of his triumph. The more angry Cobo became, the more Ramon gloated over his humili-

ation in the presence of the damsel to whom they both were paying court. But the tables were turned when Cobo, thoroughly provoked and seeing himself beaten, called General Patiño to the rescue.

"Come here, General; you who are eminent as an authority —Do you think it correct to say *afeard?*"

The General, greatly flattered by this opportune mouthful of honey, replied, addressing Maldonado in a tone of paternal instruction:

"No, Ramoncito, no. You are mistaken. Such a word as *afeard* was never heard of."

The young man jumped in his chair. Suddenly abandoning all irony, and his eyes flashing, he began to exclaim that they did not know what they were talking about, that it would seem that the best authorities were liars, and so on, and so on—that he was quite certain he was right, and that he wanted a dictionary forthwith.

"To tell you the truth," said Don Julian, scratching his head, "the dictionary I used to possess has disappeared. I do not know who can have taken it. But it seems to me—I agree with the General—that we say afraid and not afeard."

This fresh blow was too much for Maldonado; pale already, and tremulous with vexation, he uttered a last cry of despair.

"But *afeard* is derived from *fear*, gentlemen!"

"Fear or small beer, it is all the same!" exclamed Cobo, with an insolent peal of laughter. "Confess now that you have put your foot in it, and promise not to do it any more."

Maldonado's disgust and rage knew no bounds. He struggled on a few minutes with incoherent words and gestures; but as the only reply to his energetic protests were laughter and sarcasm, he resigned himself to an attitude of dignity and scorn, chewing the cud of bitterness, his lips quivering, his looks grim, a snort of indignation now and again inflating his nostrils. Cobo remained unmoved, taking every opportunity that offered for shooting a poisoned dart of repartee at the foe, which enchanted the girls and made their elders smile

soberly. No one in this world ever hungered and thirsted for justice as did Ramoncito at this moment.

The arrival of another visitor ended, or at any rate, suspended, his torments. The Duke of Requena was announced. His entrance produced an agitation which sufficiently indicated his consequence. Calderón went forward to receive him, offering him both hands with much effusion. All the men rose in haste, and left their seats to meet him with smiles and gestures expressive of the reverence he inspired. The ladies turned their heads to greet him with curiosity and respect, and Pepa Frias rose to shake hands with him. Even Father Ortega deserted his Marquesa and went forward with a submissive and engaging bow, smiling at him with his bright eyes behind the strong spectacles for short sight which he wore. For a few minutes the only words to be heard in the room were "Señor Duque," "Señor Duque"—"Oh Señor Duque!"

The object of all these attentions was a short, stout man with a lividly-pale face, prominent squinting eyes, white hair, and a grizzled moustache as stiff and harsh as the quills of a porcupine. His lips were thick and mobile, stained by the juice of a cigar which he held, not lighted, between his teeth, incessantly passing it from one corner of his mouth to the other. He might be about sixty years of age, more rather than less. He was wrapped in a magnificent loose fur coat, which he had not removed in the ante-room, having a cold. But on setting foot in the little drawing-room, the heat struck him as unpleasant, and hardly replying to the greetings and and smiles which hailed him from all sides, he only muttered rudely, in the hoarse, thick voice characteristic of men with a short neck: "Poof! a perfect furnace!" And he added a Valencian expletive more vehement than choice. At the same time he unbuttoned his overcoat. Twenty hands were laid on it to help him to take it off, which somewhat hindered the process.

And now, in the Calderón's drawing-room, was repeated the scene which has oftener than any other been performed in

this world, of the Israelites in the desert worshipping the Golden Calf. The new-comer was no less a person than Don Antonio Salabert, Duke of Requena—the famous Salabert, the richest of the rich in Spain, one of the colossal figures of finance, and, beyond a doubt, the most famous for the extent and importance of his transactions. He was a native of Valencia. No one had ever heard of his family. Some said he had been a mere waif in the streets; others that he had begun as a footman to some banker, and had risen to be a sort of messenger and errand man, others that he had been an adventurer under Cabrera in the first civil war, and that the origin of his fortunes was a valise full of gold, of which he had robbed a traveller. Some even went so far as to credit him with having belonged to one of the notorious troops of banditti who infested Spain just after the war. He, however, explained the growth of his fortune—which amounted to no less than four hundred millions of reales*—in the simplest and most graphic way. When he was angry with any of his clerks—as very frequently happened—and found that they took offence at his gross abuse, he would say to them, shouting like a possessed creature: "Do you know how I came by my money? By taking many a kick behind. Nothing but kicks will ever help you up the ladder. Do you understand?"

It must be confessed that there was something a little vague about this explanation, but the authority with which it was delivered gave it irrefragable value. Assuming it as the basis of the inquiry, we might perhaps be able to form a just estimate of the character and the achievements of the wealthy banker.

"Hallo, little lady," said he, going up to Clementina and taking her by the chin as if she were a child. "You here? I did not see your carriage below."

"No, Papa; I came on foot."

"You are a wonder. You can take mine if you like."

"No, I would rather walk. I have been out of spirits lately."

* Above 19,000,000 of dollars; about £4,000,000 sterling.

The duke had turned his back on all the company, and was talking to his daughter with as much affability as he was capable of. He rarely saw her. Clementina was his natural daughter, the child of a woman of the lowest type, as he himself had probably been. Afterwards, when he was already beginning to be rich, he had married a young girl of the middle class, by whom he had no family. This lady, whose health since her marriage had been extremely delicate, had agreed, or to be exact, had herself proposed that her husband's daughter should come to live with her. Clementina had therefore been brought up at home, and was loved as a daughter by her father's wife, whom she loved and respected as a mother. Since her marriage she had paid her frequent visits; but as her father was always busy, she did not go into his rooms, but left her mother's —for so she called her—only to quit the house. Excepting on days when there was some great dinner or reception, or when she met him by chance in the street or at a friend's house, they never talked together.

After inquiring for her husband and sons, the duke, without sitting down, turned to talk to Calderón and Pepe Frias. He was a man of common and provincial appearance; he rarely smiled, and when he did, it was so faintly as to be hardly perceptible. He was in the habit of calling things by their names, and addressing every one without any formula of courtesy, saying things to their face which might have seemed grossly rude, but that he knew how to give them a tone of friendly bluntness which deprived them of their sting. He was not loquacious; he generally stood silently chewing the end of his cigar and studying his interlocutor with his squinting and impenetrable eyes. When he talked it was with a factitious and cunning simplicity which was not unattractive, but through it pierced the old man, the Valencian foundling, shrewd, sarcastic, crafty and uncommunicative.

Pepa Frias began to talk of money matters; on this subject the widow was inexhaustible. She wanted to know everything, was afraid of being taken in, always greedy of large

profit, and comically terrified at the idea of a depreciation of the Stocks she held. She would have every detail repeated to satiety.

"Should she sell Bank Stock and buy Cubas? What was the Government going to do about entailed estates? She had heard rumours! Would money be dearer at the next settlement? Would it not be better to sell at once, and make thirty centimes, than to wait till the end of the month?"

To her Salabert's words were as the Delphic oracle; the banker's fame acted like a charm. But, unluckily, the Duke—like every oracle, ancient or modern—was wont to answer ambiguously. Often his only reply was a grunt, which might mean assent, dissent, or doubt; while the words, which now and then made their way between the cigar and his moist, stained lips, were obscure, brief, and frequently unintelligible. Besides, every one knew that he was not to be trusted, that he loved to put his friends on the wrong track, and see them get a tumble in some bad speculation. Nevertheless, Pepa persisted in hoping to wring from that great mind the secret of the hidden Pactolus, playfully taking him by the lapels of his coat, calling him old fellow, old fox, Sphinx, glorying in her audacity, which amounted to a flirtation. But the banker was not to be cajoled. He humoured her mood, answering her with grunts, or with some coarse joke at which Calderón would laugh, though he felt in no laughing mood as he noted the frequency of the duke's expectorations on his carpet; for the munching of his cigar gave rise to the necessity, and he was not accustomed to note what he was doing. Calderón was as much irritated and annoyed as if his visitor had spit in his face. The third time it happened he could contain himself no longer; with his own hands he fetched a spittoon. Salabert gave him a mocking glance and winked at Pepa.

Calderón, now easier in his mind, became quite loquacious, and endeavoured to reply instead of the Duke, and advise Pepa as to her investments; but though he was a man of

prudence and experience in such matters, the widow did not value his counsels, nor would she listen to them. When all was said and done, there was an enormous gulf between him and Salabert—the one an ordinary stock-broker, the other a genius of banking. The Duke, no doubt, assented inarticulately to the opinions of the master of the house, but Pepa would none of them.

Salabert presently left them to themselves, and seated himself on the arm of a chair in a lounging attitude, which he alone would have ventured on. Instead of being disliked for his coarse rudeness, his bad manners contributed not a little to his prestige and to the idolatrous reverence which was paid him in society. Having left the spittoon behind him, he again expectorated on the carpet with a malicious pleasure which was visible through his imperturbable mask of good humour. Calderón on his part frowned gloomily once more, till at length, with a heroic determination to ignore the conventionalities, he once more fetched the spittoon, but less boldly than before, for he only pushed it along with his foot. Pepa, meanwhile, seated herself on the other arm, and went on coaxing the Duke till at last he paid more attention to her. He glanced at her several times from head to foot, dwelling with satisfaction on her figure, which was round and shapely. Altogether Pepa was a fresh-looking and attractive woman. In a few minutes the banker leaned over her without much delicacy, and, putting his face so close to hers, that he almost seemed to touch her cheek with his lips, he said in a whisper:

"Have you many Osuñas?"

"A few—yes——"

"Sell at once."

Pepa looked him straight in the eyes, and, taking the advice as meant, she said no more. A few minutes later it was she who put her face across to the banker's, and asked him mysteriously:

"And what shall I buy?"

"Entailed estate," he replied in the same tone.

Just now a lady and gentleman came in, a young couple, both under the middle height, smiling, and lively.

"Here are my young people," said Pepa.

They were, in fact, a pleasing pair; well matched, with attractive, candid faces, and so young that they really looked like a couple of children. They shook hands with every one in turn, and every face beamed with the affectionate protecting feeling which they could not fail to inspire.

"Here is your mother-in-law, Emilio. What a vexatious meeting, eh?" said Pepa to the young man.

"Mother-in-law! No, no. Mamma, mamma," replied he, pressing her hand affectionately.

"Heaven reward you!" replied the lady, with a comical sigh of gratitude.

Once more the company settled into their seats. The young couple sat down by the mistress of the house. Clementina had left her seat, and was talking to Maldonado; Pepe Castro's name recurred frequently in their conversation. Meanwhile Cobo was improving the opportunity, and making Pacita laugh with his impertinence; but although he hoped that Esperanza might receive his jests with equal favour, this was not the case. The young lady was grave and absent-minded, and evidently trying to overhear what Ramoncito and Clementina were saying; Pinedo had remained standing, and was doing the civil to the Duke; and the General, seeing his adored one in eager conversation with the new comers—tired, too, of finding that his elaborately disguised compliments were not understood, nor even his poetical allusions—followed his example. The Marquesa and the priest still sat whispering vehemently to each other in a corner, she more and more humble and insinuating, sitting at the very edge of her chair, and bending forward to make herself heard; he every minute more grave and rigid, closing his eyes from time to time as if he were in the confessional.

"What a pair of babies!" said Pepa to Mariana, alluding to

the young couple. "Is it not a shame to think of such children being married? How much better they would be playing with their tops!"

The young people in question laughed, and looked lovingly at each other.

"They play with them still, at spare moments," said Cobo Ramirez in a childish squeak.

"Don't talk nonsense!" cried Pepa, turning on him fiercely. "Have they told you what they play at?"

Cobo and Mariana exchanged a significant look. Irenita, the young wife, coloured deeply.

"You are growing old, Pepa. Remember you are a grandmother," said Mariana.

"And such a grandmother!" exclaimed Cobo in an undertone, intended to be heard only by the lady concerned. She glanced at him, half smiling and half vexed, showing that she had heard, and was on the whole pleased. Cobo affected innocence.

"Is your quarrel over?" said the widow, turning to her children. "And how long will peace last? Mercy, what a squabbling pair. Look here, I will go to your house no more, for when I find you sulking I long to take a broomstick and break it over your shoulders."

The whole company turned round to look at the husband and wife, who were smiling beatifically. This time they both blushed. But in spite of the gravity which remained stamped on Emilio's features, it was clear that his mother-in-law's free and easy sallies did not altogether displease him.

General Patiño, at Señora de Calderón's request, pressed the button of an electric bell. A servant came in to whom his mistress gave a sign, and five minutes later he reappeared with two others, carrying trays with cups, tea, cakes and biscuits. There was a stir of satisfaction; a change of attitude in all the party, and the sparkle in their eyes of the animal pleased to satisfy a craving of nature. Esperanza hastened to leave her friend and Ramirez, and proceeded to help her mother in the

task of pouring out tea for the company. Ramoncito took advantage of the moment when the young girl offered him a cup, to observe in an aside that he was much surprised at her finding any pleasure in listening to the nonsensical or unseemly speeches of Cobo Ramirez. Esperanza looked at him somewhat abashed, but she replied that she had heard no nonsense; that Cobo was very pleasant and amiable. Ramoncito, in his lowest and most pathetic tones, protested against such an opinion, and persisted in running down his friend, till Cobo's suspicions were aroused, and he came up, jesting as usual. On this our illustrious deputy grew sullen once more, and drew in his horns; it only remained for Cobo to bring out some piece of insulting nonsense to turn the laugh against his rival.

This was the moment for discussing literature; a stage which always supervenes in every afternoon or evening party in Madrid. General Patiño mentioned a new play which had just been brought out with great success, and raised some objections to it, chiefly on the ground of certain scenes being too highly coloured. Mariana declared that on no account, then, would she go to see it; and all agreed in anathematising the immorality which nowadays is the delight of play-writers. Naturalism was becoming a curse. Cobo Ramirez, who had taken tea and then more tea, and had eaten a fabulous quantity of sandwiches and biscuits, told the company that he had lately read a novel entitled "Le Journal d'une Dame"—in French of course—which was precious, charming, the most delightful thing he had ever read. For in literature Cobo—strange to say—was all for refinement, spirituality and delicacy. It was of no use to talk to him of those dreary books which dwell on the number of times a bricklayer stretches himself when he gets out of bed—or of biscuits and cakes a young gentleman can eat at afternoon tea—or describe the birth of a child and other such horrors. Novels ought to deal with pleasant things since they are written to give pleasure. And all this he pronounced with decision, snorting like a war-horse as he talked. All the audience agreed with him.

But this literary lecture was prematurely cut short by the arrival of another visitor, a man, neither tall nor short, nor stout nor thin, square shouldered and dapper, sallow, and wearing a black beard so thick and curly that it looked like a false one. This was no less a personage than the Minister of Public Works, a member of the Cabinet. He carried his head so high that the back of it was almost lost between his shoulders, and his half-closed eyes flashed self-confident and patronising gleams from between his long black lashes. Till the age of two-and-twenty he had carried his head as nature intended; but from the day when he had been made vice-president of the section of Civil and Canon Law in the Academy of Jurisprudence, he had begun to hold it higher and higher, by slow and majestic degrees, as the moon rises over the sea on the stage at the opera-house, that is to say by slight and frequent jerks with a rope. He was elected a provincial member—a little jerk; then deputy to the Cortes—another little jerk; Governor of a district, and another little jerk; Director General of a department—another; President of the Committee of Ways and Means—another; Member of the Cabinet—yet another. But now the rope was at an end. If they had made him heir to the throne, Jimenez Arbós could not have held his large head a tenth of an inch higher.

His entrance on the scene produced some little sensation, but not such as that of the Duke of Requena. He, whose puffy, sensual face could not conceal the scorn he felt for the Assembly, nevertheless hurried to greet him with a deference and servility which amazed every one, all the more by comparison with the rough discourtesy he usually displayed in social intercourse. The Minister, on his part, distributed hand-shakings with an air of abstraction which was positively offensive. It was only when he greeted Pepa Frias that he showed any signs of animation. The widow asked him in a familiar tone:

"How is it that you are in evening dress?"

"I am on my way to dine at the French Embassy."

"And then home?"

"Yes."

This dialogue, carried on very rapidly in a low voice, was noticed by the Duke, who went up to Pinedo and asked him mysteriously, with an expressive sign: "I say—Arbós and Pepa Frias?"

"These two months past, at least."

The gaze which the banker now bestowed on the widow was widely different from his former glances. He was more attentive, more respectful, keener, and presently somewhat meditative. Calderón had approached the Minister and was talking to him with polite attention; Salabert joined them. But the great man was not inclined to talk of business, or perhaps he was afraid of the financier; the press had thrown out some malevolent hints as to Requena's transactions with the Government. So in a few minutes the Duke attached himself, instead, to Pepa Frias, and stood chatting with her in a corner of the room.

Clementina was growing more and more impatient, longing vehemently to get away. Still, she would not go, for fear her father should insist on accompanying her. The Minister was the first to depart, taking leave with the same impressive absent-mindedness, never looking at the person he addressed, but up at the ceiling. The Duke meanwhile had quite taken possession of the widow, displaying such effusive gallantry that he might have been about to make her a declaration of love. The General, observing this, said to Pinedo:

"Look how eager the Duke has become! He is certainly making love to Pepa."

"No," replied the other very gravely. "He is making love to the transfer of the Riosa Mining Company."

At this moment Pepa Frias announced in a loud voice that she was going.

"Where are you off to, next?" asked the banker.

"To Lhardy's shop, to buy some Italian sausages."

"I will take you there."

"Do—and I will treat you to some little tarts."

The Duke was delighted to accept the invitation.

"Come along, too, child?" she added to her daughter.

Clementina waited only five minutes longer. As soon as she felt sure of not overtaking her father on the stairs, she rose, and, under the pretext of having forgotten some commission, she also took leave.

CHAPTER III.

SALABERT'S DAUGHTER.

Clementina descended the stairs in some anxiety, and on setting foot in the street, breathed a sigh of relief. She went off at a brisk pace down the Calle del Siete de Julia, across the Plaza Mayor, and on through the Calle de Atocha. On reaching this, she suddenly remembered the youth who had previously followed her, and turned her head in anxiety. No one. There was nothing to alarm her. No one was in pursuit. At the door of one of the best houses in the street she stopped, looked hastily and stealthily both ways, and went in. A hardly perceptible sign of inquiry to the porter, was answered by his hand to his cap. She flew to the back staircase, to escape any unpleasant meeting no doubt, and ran up in such a hurry that on reaching the second floor she was quite breathless, and pressed one hand to her heart. With the other, she knocked twice at one of the doors, which was instantly and noiselessly opened; she rushed in as if the enemy were at her heels.

"Better late than never," said a young man who had opened it, and who carefully shut it again.

He was a man of eight-and-twenty or thirty, above the middle height, slightly built, with delicate and regular features, a colour in his cheeks, a moustache curled up at the ends, a pointed chin-tuft, and black hair carefully parted down the middle. He looked like a toy soldier—that is to say, he was of the effeminate military type. His face was not unlike those of the dolls on which tailors display ready-made clothing, and was not less unpleasing and repulsive. He wore a pearl-grey

velvet morning jacket, elaborately braided, and slippers of the same material and colour, with initials embroidered in gold. It was evident at a glance that he was one of those men who care greatly for the decoration of their person; who touch up every detail with as much finish and attention as a sculptor bestows on a statue; who believe that curling and gumming their moustaches is a sacred and bounden duty; who accept the fact that the Supreme Creator has bestowed on them a fascinating presence, and do their best to improve on His work.

"How late you are!" he exclaimed once more, fixing on her face a conventional gaze of sad reproach.

The lady rewarded him with a gracious smile, saying at the same time in a tone of raillery, "It is never too late if luck comes at last."

She took his hand and pressed it fondly; then, still holding it, she led him along the passages to a small room which seemed to be the young man's study. It was a luxurious den, artistically decorated; the walls were hung with dark blue plush curtains, held up by rings on a bronze rod under the cornice; there were arm-chairs of various shapes and sizes, a writing-table in walnut-wood ornamented with wrought-iron, and by the side of it a book-stand with a few books—about two dozen perhaps. Suspended by silken cords from the ceiling, and against the walls, were horse-trappings and several saddles, common and military, with their stirrups hanging down; curbs of many ages and lands, whips, fine woollen horse-cloths richly embroidered, gold and silver spurs, all very handsome and in perfect order. The hippic tastes of the owner of this "study" were no less evident in the corridor which led to it from the door; everywhere there were portraits of horses saddled or stripped. Even on the writing-table, the inkstand, paper-weights, and paper-knife were decorated with horse-shoes stirrups, or whips. Through an arch with columns, only half-closed by a handsome tapestry curtain representing a youth in powder kneeling to a lady *à la Pompadour*, a handsome mahogany bedstead with a canopy was visible.

On reaching this little room the lady let herself drop gracefully into a pretty little lounging chair, and went on in a light jesting tone: "So you are not glad to see me?"

"Very. But I should have been glad to see you sooner. I have been waiting for you above an hour and a half."

"And what then? Is it such a sacrifice to wait an hour and a half for the woman who adores you? Have you not read how Leander swam every evening across the Hellespont to see his beloved? No, you have never read that nor anything else. Well, I believe that knowledge would not suit you. Books would spoil that pretty colour in your cheeks, and undermine the strength and agility with which you ride and drive. Besides, some men were born only to be handsome and strong and to amuse themselves, and you are one of them."

"Come, come. It seems to me that you regard me as an idiot ignorant even of my alphabet?" exclaimed the young man somewhat piqued and distressed, as he stood in front of her.

"No, my dear, no!" she replied, laughing, and seizing one of his hands she kissed it with a sudden impulse of tenderness. "Now you are insulting me. Do you think I could love an idiot? Take this," she went on, taking off her hat. "Put my hat on the bed with the greatest care. Now come here, wretch that you are. You are so touchy that you forget you began by being rude to me. An hour and a half! What then? Come close; kneel down; wait till I pull your hair for you."

But the young man, instead of obeying her, drew up a smoking chair, and perched himself on it in front of her.

"Do you know what kept me? Why that tiresome boy who followed me again."

And as she spoke she suddenly grew serious: a well-defined frown puckered her pretty brows.

"It is insufferable," she went on. "I do not know what to do. Whenever I stir, morning or evening, this shadow haunts me. I had to take refuge at Mariana's; then, having gone there

I had no choice but to stay a little while. Papa came in, and to avoid his escorting me home I had to wait till he went first. So you see."

"A pretty fellow is that boy!" exclaimed the man, with a laugh.

"Very much so! It would be very amusing if he found out where I come, and every one were to hear of it, and it were to reach my husband's ears. Laugh away, laugh away!"

"Why not? Who but you would think of objecting to so platonic an admirer? Have you had any note from him? Has he ever spoken a word to you?"

"That would not matter in the least. It is the persecution which jars on my nerves. He is just such a boy as would be capable out of mere spite, if he detected me entering this house, of writing an anonymous letter. And you know the peculiar position in which I stand with regard to my husband."

"There is not a chance of it. Those who write anonymous notes are not admirers, but envious women. Shall I meet him face to face and give him a fright?"

"How can you ask such a question!" exclaimed Clementina, indignantly. "Listen Pepe, you are a man of feeling, and have plenty of intelligence, but you sadly lack a little more delicacy to enable you to understand certain things. You should give rather less time to your club and your horses, and cultivate your mind a little."

"Is that your opinion?" cried Pepe, angered extremely by this reproof.

"Well, if you wish that I should not tell you such things, there are others which you should not say."

Pepe Castro shrugged his shoulders scornfully, and rose from his chair. He paced the room two or three times with an air of abstraction, and stopped at last in front of a little picture which he took down to dust it with his handkerchief. Clementina watched him with anger in her eyes. She suddenly started to her feet as if moved by a spring; but then, control-

ling her petulance, she quietly went into the adjoining room, took her hat off the bed, and began to put it on in front of a looking-glass, very deliberately, though the slight trembling of her hands still betrayed the annoyance she was repressing.

"There," she presently exclaimed, in a tone of indifference, "I am going. Do you want anything out?"

The young man turned round, and exclaimed with surprise: "Already!"

"Already," replied she with affected determination.

Castro went up to her, put his arm round her neck, and raising the red veil with the other hand, kissed her on the temple.

"It is always the same," said he. "I get the broken head and you want to wear the bandage."

"What is that you are saying?" she replied in some confusion. "I am going because I have another visit to pay before dinner."

"Come Clementina, you cannot make believe, even if you wish it. You must understand that I cannot listen to insults and laugh, and you insult me at every moment."

"I really do not understand you; I do not know what insults or make believe you allude to," she replied, with affected innocence.

Pepe tried coaxingly to take her hat off again, but she repelled him with with an imperious gesture. He then put his arm round her waist and led her to the sofa; he sat down and taking her hands kissed them again and again with passionate affection. She stood upright and would not be softened. However, he was so vehement and so humble in his endearments, that at last she snatched away her hands and exclaimed, half laughing, but still half vexed:

"Have done, have done: I am tired of your whining—like a Newfoundland dog! You are abject. I would be torn in pieces before I would humiliate myself like that."

She took her hat off, and went herself to place it on the bed.

"When a man is as much in love as I am," replied the youth

somewhat abashed, "he does not regard anything as a humiliation."

"Really and truly, boy?" said she, smiling and taking him by the chin with her slender pink fingers; "I do not believe it. You are not the stuff that lovers are made of. Well, I will put you to the proof. If I told you to do a thing that might cost you your life, or, which is worse, your honour—a few years in prison—would you do it?"

"I should think so!"

"Well then—well then, I want you to kill my husband."

"How barbarous!" he exclaimed in dismay, opening his eyes very wide.

The lady looked at him steadily for a few minutes with scrutinising, sarcastic eyes. Then with a sharp laugh, she exclaimed:

"You see, miserable man, you see! You are a fine gentleman of Madrid, a member of the *Savage Club.* Neither for me nor any other woman would you exchange your dress-coat and white waistcoat for a prison uniform."

"You have such strange ideas."

"Well, well. Go on in the way which your pusillanimous nature points out to you, and do not get into mischief. You will understand that I only spoke in jest; but it has confirmed me in the opinion I had already formed."

"But if you have so poor an opinion of my devotion, I do not know why you should love me," said the young man, again somewhat piqued.

"Why I love you? For the same reason for which I do everything—Caprice. I saw you one day in the Park of the Retiro, breaking in a horse splendidly, and I took a fancy to you. Then, two months later, I saw you at the fencing gallery at Biarritz, crossing foils with a Russian, and that finally bewitched me. I got you introduced to me, I did my best to please you—I did in fact please you—and here we are."

Pepe made up his mind to endure with patience her half cynical tone of raillery, and by dint of talking she presently

dropped it. Clementina when she was content, was affectionate and gay, and ready to yield to impulses of generosity; her face, as singular as it was beautiful, never indeed softened to sweetness, but it had a kind, maternal expression which was very attractive. But if her nerves were irritated, and her opinions or wishes were crossed, the under-current of pride, obstinacy and even cruelty, which lay beneath, came to the surface, and her blue eyes shot flashes of fierce sarcasm or fury.

Pepe Castro, who was neither illustrious nor clever, had nevertheless the art of amusing her with the gossip of society, and innuendoes against those persons for whom she had a marked antipathy. The means were coarse but the effect was excellent. The Condesa de T——, a lady whom Clementina hated mortally for some displeasure she had once done her, was desperately hard up; she had gone to borrow of Z—— the old banker, who had granted the loan, but at a percentage which had made the lady stare. The Marqués de L——, and his wife, for whom also she had an aversion, had, before he was in office, given entertainments to the electors at their country house, with splendid banquets; but as soon as he was made Minister, though they still gave parties there was no *buffet*. Julita R——, a very pretty girl who, again, was no favourite with the haughty lady, had been turned out of doors by the M——s for having been found in their son's room—a lad of fifteen. This and much more of the same kind fell from the lips of the generous youth, with a scornful humour which put the fair one into a better temper. This was Pepe Castro's sole talent of an intellectual character; his other accomplishments were purely physical.

The clouds had cleared from Clementina's brow. She was now loquacious, smiling, and lavish of caresses; during the hour she remained with her lover, he was amply indemnified for the stabs she had given him on first arriving, as happy as their *tête-à-tête* could make him.

It had already long since become dusk. The youth lighted

the two lamps on the chimney-piece, without calling the servant—his only servant, and the only living soul with him in his rooms.

Pepe Castro was the son of a noble house of Arragon; his elder brother bore a well-known title, and his sister had married into a family of rank. He had been educated at Madrid; at the age of twenty he lost his father. For a time he lived with his elder brother, but it was not long before they quarrelled, since the elder, who was economical to avarice, could not endure Pepe's wasteful extravagance. He then tried living under his sister's roof, but at the end of a few months incompatibility of temper between himself and his brother-in-law led to such violent disputes, that it was said in the Madrid clubs and drawing-rooms that they had cuffed and cudgelled each other soundly; a duel was only prevented by the interference of some of the more respectable members of the family. Then, after living for some time at an hotel, he decided on furnishing rooms. He engaged a servant, had his breakfast brought in from an eating-house, and dined sometimes at Lhardy's and sometimes with one or another of his numerous friends. His stables were in the immediate neighbourhood, Calle de las Urosa, and were not ill-furnished: two saddle horses, one English and one cross-bred; two teams, one foreign and one Spanish; a Berline, a cart, a mail-phaeton, and a break; it was a channel through which his fortune was rapidly running away, though it was not the principal one. He had, in fact, left the greater portion on the gaming-tables at the club, and by no means a small part had been grabbed by certain smart damsels, whom he had promoted in a few hours to the rank of fashionable courtesans. This, however, was a fact he always denied, thinking it might diminish his prestige as a lady-killer; but it is nevertheless a fact, like everything else herein set down.

All this is as much as to say that Pepe Castro was at this moment a ruined man; nevertheless, he went on living in the same comfort and style. His losses and his borrowing cost

him a great deal: loans from his brother on the mortgage of estate he could not sell, post-obits to merciless usurers on his prospects from an old and infirm uncle, accepted for three times their cash value; jewels given him by his sister, who could not give him money; exorbitant charges run up by the importers of carriages and horses; bills with the tailor, the perfumer; with Lhardy, the restaurant-keeper, with every one in short.

It seemed impossible that a man could live easy in such a tangle of toils and nets. And nevertheless, our young gentleman enjoyed the same beautiful serenity of mind and lightness of heart as many others of his comrades and acquaintances, who, as we shall have occasion to see, were no less ruined, though less fascinating.

"I have a surprise in store for you," said Clementina, as she again put on her hat and tidied her hair in front of the glass.

The handsome puppy sniffed the air, like a hound that scents game, and he went up to Clementina.

"If it is a pleasant one let me see it."

"Yes, and no less if it is an unpleasant one, rude boy. Everything I can do ought to be pleasant to you."

"No doubt, no doubt.—Let me see," he went on, trying to conceal his eagerness.

"Very well; bring me my muff."

Castro flew to obey. Clementina, when she had it in her hands, sat down on the sofa with an affectation of calm, and flourishing it in the air, she exclaimed: "Now you will not guess what I have in this muff?"

Her eyes were bright with glee and pride at the same time. Castro's sparkled with anxiety; the colour mounted to his cheeks, and he replied in a tone between assertion and inquiry:

"Fifteen thousand pesetas."*

The lady's triumphant expression instantly changed to one of wrath and disgust.

* About £600.

"Go—go away—Pig!" she furiously cried, giving him a hard box on the ear with the handsome muff. "You think of nothing but money. You have not a grain of delicacy."

"I thought——" The change in Pepe's face was no less marked; it was more gloomy than night.

"Of money, yes; I tell you so. Well then, no. Nothing of the kind. Nothing but a little tie-pin, which—fool that I am—I bought at Marbini's as I came along, to show you that I am always thinking of you."

"And I thank you from the bottom of my heart, my sweet pigeon," said the young man, making a supreme effort to recover from his sudden dejection, and producing, as a result, a forced and bitter smile. "Why do you fly into such pets? Give it me. But I know what a bad opinion you have of me."

Clementina would not give him her present. Pepe begged for it humbly; still there was in his entreaties a shade of coldness, which to the keen intuition of a woman, betrayed very plainly the disappointment at the bottom of his soul.

"No, no! My poor little pin that you despise so—I can see it in your face. It shall go into the box where I keep memorials of the dead."

She rose from her seat and pulled down her veil. Pepe was pressing in his endeavours to be attentive, and to mollify her wrath. At last, when she had almost reached the door, she suddenly turned about and drew out of her muff a neat little jewel-box, which she gave to her lover, looking him straight in the face meanwhile.

The young man's eyes opened, resting on the box with an expression of delight; then they met those of his mistress. They gazed at each other for a minute, she with a look of mischievous triumph, he with gratitude and suppressed joy.

"I always said so! No one in the world knows what love means, but you, my darling. Come here; let me thank you, let me worship you on my knees."

He dragged her to the sofa, made her sit down, and falling on his knees, kissed her gloved hands with rapture.

"Mercy, what madness!" cried the lady quite bewildered. "What a whirlwind round a trifle."

"It is not for the money, my darling, not for the money; but because you have such an original way of doing things. Because you are such a trump, such an angel!" He clasped her knees, he grovelled before her, and kissed her feet—or, to be exact, her boots.

"What an abject thing you are, Pepe!" said she, laughing.

"I don't care what you call me; I am yours, your slave till death. I owe you not only happiness, but honour. You cannot think what I have gone through these two days, over that cursed debt!" he said, in a voice of genuine emotion.

"And will you go and gamble any more, eh? Gamble, and lose it all, you wretch," said she, tumbling his hair and spoiling the beautiful parting down the middle.

"No—I swear it on my word of honour."

"On your word, and on your money, wretched man? Well, I am off," she added, with a fond little pat, and she went to look at the clock on the chimney-piece. "Mercy! How late it is—I must fly. Good-bye."

She ran to the door, waving her hand to her lover, without looking at him. He could only clutch it, and kiss the tips of her fingers.

He rushed to open the door for her, but her hand was already on the lock; indeed, she was in a fury, because her feeble efforts would not turn it.

"By-bye—till Saturday!" said she, in a whisper.

"Till the day after to-morrow."

"No, no—till Saturday."

She ran downstairs with the same cautious haste as she had used in coming up, nodded imperceptibly to the porter, and went out. She walked as far as the Plaza del Angel; there she took a hackney coach to drive home.

It was now past six; the lights in the shops had been blazing for an hour or more. She sat as far back in the corner

as she could and gazed without interest or curiosity at the streets she passed through. Her face had resumed its characteristic expression of scornful haughtiness, qualified by a certain degree of disdain and absent-mindedness.

Her refined elegance, her arrogant mien, and, above all, the severe majesty of her exceptional beauty stamped Clementina beyond question as one of the most *distinguées* women of Madrid. At the same time, though she was recognised as such, figuring in all the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy, in all the lists of fashionable persons which the papers publish on the day after a ball, a race, or any other entertainment, by birthright she was far from belonging to such a set. Her origin could not have been more humble. Her mother had been an Irish girl, the mistress of a cooper, who had landed at Valencia in search of work. Her name was Rosa Coote; she was extraordinarily handsome, and would have been even more so if she had cared for dressing or adorning her person; but the squalor in which the illicit home was kept had made her neglectful and dirty. The Valencia waif and the handsome Irish girl came to an understanding behind the cooper's back. Salabert was quite young and a brisk youth; he was not, like the girl's present protector, a victim to drunkenness. Rosa abandoned her former lover to go off with him. Within a few months, Salabert, who saw an opening for going to Cuba as steward on board a steamboat, in his turn deserted her. The Irishwoman, expecting then the birth of the offspring of this connection, wandered about for some time without any protector or means of living till she became acquainted with a carpenter, who ultimately made her his lawful wife. Clementina grew up as an intruder in this new home. Her mother was a violent and irascible creature, with bursts of tenderness which she kept exclusively for her legitimate children. Clementina she seemed to hate, and avenged on her her father's offence with cruel injustice.

A fearful childhood was that of Clementina.

If some details of it could but have been known in Madrid;

if, only in some brief vision, the scenes through which this proudest and most arrogant of dames had passed could have been placed before the eyes of her fashionable acquaintance, who would have envied her? What tortures, what refinement of cruelty! At the age of four or five she was made the watchful nurse of two brothers younger than herself, and if she neglected the smallest particular of her duties the punishment followed at once, but not such punishment as was due—a slap, or her ears pulled. No, it was premeditated to hurt her as much and as long as possible; after flogging her with a strap the wounds were washed with vinegar, she was made to tread for hours on hard peas, to wear shoes that pinched her feet, to go without water, she was thrashed with nettles.

More than once, on hearing the hapless child's outcries, the neighbours had intervened and had remonstrated with the unnatural mother. But nothing ever came of it beyond a noisy discussion, in which the passionate Irishwoman, in sputtering Valencian, poured out her wrath on the gossips of the quarter, and afterwards vented her fury on the cause of the squabble. She was always declaring that she would send the child to the workhouse, but this was opposed by the carpenter, who prided himself on being a kind-hearted and merciful man, and who sometimes interfered to mitigate her punishment, though he generally left it to his wife "to correct her daughter," as he said to the neighbours who blamed him. His educational notions clashed with his more kindly instincts, and when they got the upper hand, alas, for the poor little girl!

Certain details of these horrible torments were sickening. On one occasion Clementina had been to the well and broken the pitcher. It was the third within a month. The child dared not go home, and sought refuge with a neighbour. The woman took her to her mother, but did not leave her till she had extorted a promise that she should not be punished. And in point of fact her mother did not punish her by any ordinary process of chastisement; her cries might have led to a disturbance. She formed the diabolical idea of holding the girl's

head over a foul sink, till she was half asphyxiated and fainted away. The worst days for the wretched child were when she had dropped asleep at her prayers. The cruel Irishwoman was a bigot, and this offence she never forgave. On one occasion, she beat her so mercilessly for repeating her prayers half asleep before going to bed, that the carpenter, who was peacefully eating his supper in the kitchen, heard her cries, and went up to the bedroom, where he rescued her from her mother, who would otherwise perhaps have been the death of her.

This course of incredible cruelties ended at last in one which led to the interference of justice. The unnatural mother, at her wit's end how to torture the girl, burnt her legs with a candle. A neighbour happening to hear of it told others, and the scandal in the quarter produced a stir; they appealed to justice, informed against the Irishwoman, and the crime being proved, she was condemned to six months' imprisonment, while the girl was placed in an asylum.

About a year later Salabert came to Valencia, not yet a potentate, but with some money. On hearing what had occurred he went to see his daughter at the school for poor girls, whence he removed her to one where he paid for her education, and at long intervals went to see her. His generous deed was highly lauded, and he knew how to make it tell, setting himself up in the eyes of those who knew him as a living model of paternal devotion, in shining contrast to the brutality of his deserted mistress.

Not long after, he married, ana settled in Madrid. His wife was the daughter of a dealer in iron bedsteads and spring mattresses, in the Calle Mayor. She was plain and sickly, but gentle and affectionate, with fifty thousand dollars for her portion. At the end of three or four years of married life, finding her health increasingly delicate, Doña Carmen lost all hope of having any children, and knowing that her husband had an illegitimate daughter in a Convent at Valencia, she proposed, with rare generosity, to have her at home and treat her as their child. Salabert accepted gladly; he went to

fetch Clementina, and thenceforward a complete change came over the girl's fate.

She was at this time aged fourteen, and already a marvel of beauty, a happy combination of the refined and delicate northern type with the severer beauty of the Valencian women. Undeveloped as yet, in consequence of the cruel experiences of her childhood followed by the quiet routine of a convent, under this change of climate and mode of life she acquired in two or three years the commanding stature and majestic proportions we have seen. Her moral nature left much more to be desired. Her temper was irritable, obstinate, scornful, and gloomy. Whether she was born with these characteristics or they were the result of the misery and sufferings of her wretched infancy it would be hard to decide. In the convent, where she was never ill-treated, she was not much loved by her teachers or her companions; her character was suspicious, and her heart devoid of tenderness. Her companions' troubles not only did not touch her; but brought a cruel smile to her lips, which filled them with aversion. Then, from time to time, she had fits of fury, which made her both feared and hated. On one occasion, when a young girl had spoken to her in offensive terms, she had clutched her by the throat and nearly strangled her. And it was quite impossible afterwards to induce her to beg pardon, as the mother superior required her to do; she preferred a month of solitary confinement rather than humble herself.

The first months of her life in her father's house were a period of trial for kind Doña Carmen. Instead of a bright young creature, grateful for the immense favour she had done her, she found herself confronted with a little heartless savage, devoid of affection or docility, extravagant and capricious to the last degree, who never laughed heartily excepting when a servant had an accident, or a groom was kicked by a horse. But the good woman did not lose courage. With the unfailing instinct of a generous heart she understood that if no love could spring from the soil it was because nothing had been sown in it but the seeds of hate. The softer affections exist in

every human soul, as electricity exists in every body; but to detect them, to rouse a response, they must be treated for a length of time with a strong current of kindness. This was what Doña Carmen did to her stepdaughter. For six months she kept her in a warm atmosphere of affection, a close net of delicate thoughtfulness, and unfailing proofs of lively and loving interest. At last Clementina, who had begun by being first disdainful and then indifferent, who would pass hours together locked in her own room and never go near her stepmother but when she was sent for, who never had made any advances, but lived in absolute reserve, suddenly succumbed, feeling the vital and mysterious throb which binds human beings to each other, as it does all the bodies of the created universe. The change was strange and violent, like everything else in that strangely compounded temperament. At the most unlooked-for moment she fell on her knees before Doña Carmen, professing such deep respect, such passionate affection, that the good woman was amazed, and had great difficulty in believing in her sincerity. The revelation of lovingkindness had burst at length on the girl's soul; her icy heart had melted under the motherly warmth of the large-hearted woman; the divine essence of love henceforth had a home where hitherto the essence of Satan alone had dwelt.

It was a perfect miracle. Instead of spending her life in her room, she would never leave her stepmother's; she now called her "Mamma" with a fervour, a joy, a determination, such as are only to be seen in the devout when they appeal to the Virgin. And Clementina's feeling for her father's wife was in truth devotion. Amazed to find that so gentle, so tender a being could exist in this world, she was never tired of gazing at her, as though she had dropped from heaven. She would read her thoughts in her eyes, anticipate her smallest wishes, let no one serve her but herself; and, like every lover, insisted on the exclusive possession of the object of her affection. The slightest sign of disapproval on Doña Carmen's part was enough to disconcert her and plunge her into the deepest grief.

The haughty creature, who had made herself generally odious, would humble herself with intense satisfaction before her stepmother. It was the humiliation of the mystic prostrated by an irresistible spiritual impulse. When she felt the good woman's hand caress her face she fancied it was the touch of God Himself, and hardly dared to touch those thin, transparent fingers with her lips.

But it was only to her stepmother that she had so entirely changed. To all else, including her father, she still displayed the same scornful coldness, the same proud and obstinate temper. If now and again she seemed sweeter and more tractable, it was due, not to her own will, but to some express command of Doña Carmen's; and as soon as this command was at an end, or forgotten, she was the same malevolent being once more. The servants hated her for the insufferable pride which she showed as soon as she realised her position as her father's heiress, and for her total lack of compassion if they did wrong.

The greatest sufferer was the English governess whom her father had engaged for her. She was an elderly woman, but she had a mania for dressing and tricking herself out like a girl. This harmless weakness was so constantly the theme of Clementina's mockery, that only necessity could have made the poor woman endure it. All the secrets of her toilet were mercilessly revealed for the amusement of the servants, and her physical defects, mimicked by the young lady's waiting-maid, were the laughing-stock of the kitchen. On a certain grand occasion, a day when there was a dinner-party, Clementina hid the old maid's false teeth, which she had left on the dressing-table after washing them. Her discomfiture may be imagined. But she took an innocent revenge by calling her "*Señorita Capricho*," and setting her as an exercise to translate from English into French certain maxims and aphorisms of scorching application, as: "Pride is the leprosy of the soul; a proud girl is a leper whom all should avoid with horror." "Those who do not respect their seniors can never hope to be respected," and the like.

Clementina laughed at these innuendoes; sometimes she would even dare to substitute some phrase of her own for that of her governess. Where she should have translated: "There is nothing so odious and contemptible as haughtiness in the young," she would write: "There is nothing so ridiculous and laughable as presumption in the old." Miss, as she was called, took offence, and complained to Doña Carmen, who would appeal to her stepdaughter, reproving her gently, and Clementina, seeing her grieved and annoyed, would smoothe her brow and kiss her lovingly. And all was well till next time. In fact Miss Anna and the servants were no doubt in the right when they said that the Señora would be the ruin of the girl. Doña Carmen, living in fearful solitude of soul, was so captivated and gratified by the warm affection her stepdaughter was always ready to lavish on her that she had no eyes for her faults, and even if she had, would not have found the courage to correct them.

At eighteen Clementina was one of the loveliest and wealthiest women of Madrid. Her father's fortune grew like the scum of yeast. He was regarded as one of the great bankers of the city, and was not known to have any other heir, nor was it likely that he would have one. The young aristocrats of family or wealth—the best known members of the *Savage Club*—began to flutter about her with the most pressing and eager attentions. If she appeared at a party a group of men fenced her round; if she went to church, another and a larger party stood in a row awaiting her exit; if she drove out in the Castellana Avenue, a cavalcade of admirers galloped beside her carriage as a guard of honour; at the theatre pairs of opera-glasses were invariably fixed upon her. The name of Clementina Salabert was to be heard in all the conversations of the gilded youth of Madrid, to be seen in print in every drawing-room chronicle, and was registered in the capital as that of one of the brightest stars of the firmament of fashion. She took up and dropped one lover after another without a thought, thus earning the reputation of a flirt and feather-brain. But this

never interferes with a girl's chance of adorers; on the contrary, the self-love of men prompts them to pay great attentions to women of that stamp, in the hope, born of vanity, of being the nail to fix the weather-cock. Nor did she suffer any serious damage from a coarse and malignant rumour which, all through Madrid, connected her in a strange friendship with a young and famous bull-fighter. In this affair Doña Carmen's simplicity and weakness played a leading part. Not only did the good lady allow the man to visit at her house, and sit at her table, but she even accompanied the pair in public on more than one occasion. This, and her having cheered him at the death of several bulls, gave scandal—as busy in the capital as in the provinces—sufficient pretext for an attack on the envied beauty. But as it could bring forward nothing but bold suspicion and vague conjecture, and as, on the other side, there were positive facts which far outweighed them, the calumny did not diminish the number of her adorers. Its only use was as an outlet for the bile of some rejected one.

At this age, and often after, Clementina's manners betrayed a strong infusion of Bohemianism—of the free and easy airs and sarcastic coolness of the adventuresses of Madrid. A similar tendency may be observed, in a more or less exaggerated form, in all the upper circles of Madrid Society; it is a mark which distinguishes it from that of other countries. And in this tendency, which is everywhere conspicuous from the palace to the hovel, there is some good; it is not wholly evil. In the first place it implies a protest against the perpetual falsehood which the increasing refinement and complication of social formalities inevitably entail. Propriety of conduct and moderation of language are highly praiseworthy no doubt, but in an exaggerated form they result in the cold courtesy of a *diplomate* at a foreign Court. Men and women, crushed under the weight of so much formality, become artificial beings, puppets, whose acts and words are all set forth in a programme. To exclude liberty and familiarity from society is to undermine human nature; to prohibit frankness of speech

is to destroy the charm which ought to exist in all human intercourse.

Moreover, an instinct of equality underlies this assertion of freedom, and cannot fail to make it attractive to every lover of Nature and truth. A lady is not a bundle of fine clothes, of foregone conclusions and ready-made phrases: she is, above all else, a woman in whom culture has, or ought to have, tempered impetuosity of character and impulses of vanity, but not to have impaired the genuineness of Nature by transforming her in society into a cold dry doll, devoid of grace and originality. It must not be supposed that the perfect refinement and elegance proper to the scenes where the upper classes meet are unknown in Madrid. They are constantly observed by almost every Spanish woman of family; but, happily, they are united with the vivacity, grace, and spontaneity of the Spanish race, making our fair ones, in the opinion of impartial observers, the most accomplished, gracious, and agreeable women in Europe—excepting, perhaps, the French.

Clementina had a somewhat exaggerated taste for this freedom of word and action. She had acquired it no one knows how—by contagion in the atmosphere perhaps—since women in her position are not in the habit of spending their time with the commoner sort. She had had a waiting maid, born and brought up in Maravillas, and it was from her, in her moments of excitement, that Clementina picked up the greater part of her slang and sayings. Then came her friendship with the *torero* above-mentioned; an acquaintance with various young men who cultivated that style; the lower class of theatres, where the manners and customs of the lower classes of the Madrid populace are set on the stage—not without grace; and her intimacy with Pepe Frias, and some other fast women of fashion, finally gave her the full Bohemian flavour. She was an enthusiast for bull-fights. It was a perfect marvel if she missed one, sitting in her private box with the orthodox white mantilla and red carnations. And she would discuss the chances, and fulminate criticisms, and bestow applause; and

was regarded by the *habitués* as a keen and eager connoisseur. The national sport, exciting and bloody, was quite after her mind, violent and indomitable as she was by nature. When she saw other women covering their eyes or showing weakness over the fortunes of the arena, she laughed sardonically, as doubting the genuineness of their horror.

Among the many adorers and suitors who successively and rapidly rose and fell in her favour, there was one who succeeded in securing her notice, at any rate, for a rather longer time than the rest. His name was Tomas Osorio. He was a young man of twenty-eight or thirty, rich, small and delicate, with a pleasing face and a lively, determined temper. Either of deliberate purpose, or from genuine independence of character, he made a deeper impression than his peers. When he first paid attention to her he did not cringe nor completely abdicate his own will. In some differences on important points in the course of his long courtship—for it lasted not less than two years—he firmly maintained his dignity. He was, like her, irritable, haughty and scornful; purse-proud too, and with a spiteful wit which stood him in good stead with women. Thanks to these qualities, Clementina did not tire of him so soon as of the rest. But at the end of the two years, within a few days of the marriage, it was broken off in a very public and almost scandalous manner. All Madrid was talking of it, and commentary was endless. The conclusion arrived at was that it was the gentleman who had taken the first steps towards the rupture, and this report, whether true or false, reached Clementina's ears, and was such a stab to her pride that she was almost ill with rage.

Another year went by. She had other suitors, off and on, and Osorio, on his part, courted other damsels. But in both, notwithstanding, the memory of the past survived. She was burning for revenge. So long as that man was going about the world, so perfectly content as he seemed, she felt herself humiliated. He, on the contrary, in spite of his affected indifference, was still consumed by love, or rather by desire.

Clementina had captivated his senses, had pierced his flesh, and, do what he would, he could not extract the dart. She was always in his thoughts, always before his eyes, provoking his passion. The longer the time that elapsed the fiercer the fire burned within him, and the greater were the effort and the anguish of keeping up a haughty and indifferent demeanour when they happened to meet. Clementina, with a penetration common in women, had no difficulty in guessing that her former love still cherished a secret passion for her, and felt a malicious joy. Thenceforward she dressed and adorned herself for him alone—to bewitch him, to fascinate him, to make him drain the bitter cup of jealousy.

From this moment dated her fame as an elegant woman. Clementina was indeed, in this matter, a great artist. She knew how to dress so that her clothes should never by their colour or quality attract attention to the prejudice of her face. Understanding that what a woman wears should be not a uniform, but an adornment to set off the perfections which nature has bestowed upon her, she was no blind slave of fashion; when she thought it unbecoming to her beauty she boldly defied it or modified it. She avoided glaring hues, a profusion of trimmings, and elaborate styles of hair-dressing; she regarded and treated her person as a statue. Hence a certain tendency, constantly evident in her costume, towards drapery, and amplitude of flowing folds. Her fine, majestic figure gained greatly by this style of dress, which, though it became rather pronounced after her marriage, was never exaggerated beyond the limits of good taste. She was fond of wearing white, and this, with a simple manner of dressing her hair like that of the Milo Venus, made her appear in the drawing-rooms of Madrid like a beautiful Greek statue. One thing she did which, though highly censurable from a moral point of view, is not so as a matter of art. She wore her dresses very low. Her bust was superb; it might have been moulded by the Graces to turn the head of a god. The vain desire to display her beauty, unchecked by the wholesome control of a

mother, led her on more than one occasion to incur the severest comments of society. Poor Doña Carmen, besides knowing nothing of social custom, was so lenient to her stepdaughter's fancies and caprices, that she accepted them as quite reasonable, and as undoubted evidence of her indisputable elegance and taste.

However, her vanity brought its own punishment. On one occasion when she made her appearance at a ball given by the Alcudias, the Marquesa said as she greeted her:

"Very pretty, very nice, Clementina. Your dress is lovely; but it is too low, my dear. Come with me and let us set it right."

She took the girl up to her room and, with motherly kindness, arranged some gauzy material to cover what really ought not to be displayed. Clementina managed to conceal her mortification, ascribing the fault to the dressmaker; but she felt so humiliated by the lecture, and the pitying smile which accompanied it, that she never again could endure to see the prudish marquesa.

Under this constant fanning Osorio's flame waxed fiercer and fiercer, and he could no longer keep it to himself. At last he confided in his sister, who was fairly intimate with the young lady; he begged her to sound the way, and ascertain whether he might once more make advances without fear of a rebuff. Mariana undertook the commission. Clementina heard her with ill-disguised triumph, but sat demure until Señora de Calderon had poured out all her story, and assured her that Tomas was burning with devotion. Then she replied ambiguously, and with laughter: "She would think it over. She was deeply aggrieved by the reports that had been spread as to their rupture, but at any rate, he was not to give up all hope."

She did reflect seriously as to the means of satisfying the demands of her wounded pride, and at the end of a few days she announced to Mariana her ultimatum. If she was to consent to give her hand to Osorio, he must beg it of her

parents on his knees, in the presence of such witnesses as she might choose.

Such a preposterous idea would never have occurred to any Spanish woman of pure race, and only the admixture of British blood could have led her to conceive of such a monstrous refinement of arrogance.

When Osorio was informed of the conditions imposed by his ex-*fiancée* he flew into a violent rage, and swore defiantly that he would be cut in pieces before he would suffer such degradation. The matter dropped, and things went on as before. But as, in spite of his utmost efforts, the serpent of desire gnawed at his heart with increasing virulence, the poor wretch at the end of two months had fallen into utter dejection; he was really dying of love; he could not tear himself from Madrid, and once more he besought his sister to open negotiations. Clementina, quite sure of having him in her power, was inflexible; either he must pass beneath these strange Caudine forks, or there was no hope.

And Osorio submitted.

What could he do?—The extraordinary ceremony was carried out one evening at the lady's residence. On reaching the house Osorio found assembled about a score of women whom Clementina had chosen from among the most envious of her acquaintances, or those who had been most malignant as to the cause of their former quarrel. He adopted the best conduct he possibly could in such a case: grave and solemn, with a certain ease of language and manner, betraying a suspicion of irony, as if he were performing a comedy for the benefit of a crazy person. He gave a brief preliminary sketch of their former engagement; confessed himself to blame; praised Clementina in extravagant terms—with so little moderation indeed that he seemed to be speaking sarcastically—and professed himself unworthy to aspire to her hand. Finally declaring that as she was so worthy to be adored, and the joy of winning her so great, he thought it but a small thing to ask her of her parents on his knees. At the same time he fell

on one knee. Doña Carmen hastened to raise him, and embraced him effusively. Clementina even pressed his hand, better pleased by the grace and dignity with which he had got through the ordeal, than gratified in her conceit. In truth, on this occasion she felt for him, what she never felt again, a tiny spark of love. If any one suffered humiliation from this scene it was she herself, from the light and easy dignity with which her lover carried it off. But this was a trifle; a woman enjoys nothing more keenly and deeply than the superiority of the man who mollifies her. Clementina was happy that evening.

But though Osorio had come so well out of the ordeal, he never forgave her the intention to humiliate him; he was as proud as she. The insane passion she had inspired for a time smothered every other. His honeymoon was as brief as it was delicious. The shock of two such characters, both equally obstinate and proud, was inevitable. It soon came in the form of a series of petty annoyances which instantly extinguished the feeble sparks of affection which her husband had struck in the young wife's heart. In him passion survived longer. The knowledge each had of the other made them cautious, for fear of a more formidable collision which must have led to disaster. But this too came at last. Report said that Osorio, tired of his wife's indifference and scorn, had insulted her beyond forgiveness. Whether or no the story as it was told was true in all its details, their union at any rate was practically at an end for ever. Osorio forfeited his own right to interfere with his wife on the score of conduct, and could only look on while Clementina unblushingly and confessedly accepted the attentions of every man who offered them. He certainly, to parry the ridicule to which he was thus exposed, threw himself into excesses of dissipation, raising women from the lowest ranks to figure as his mistresses.

At home the husband and wife spoke no more to each other than was absolutely necessary. To escape the discomfort of a *tête-à-tête* at table, they always had some guest. In public they made a show of the most natural and friendly

relations; Osorio would sometimes go late to fetch his wife from the theatre or party to which she had been. But every one understood the facts of the case. Clementina, as a rule, would go out on her lover's arm; they would stand talking in the lobby in the sight of all the world, while waiting for the carriage; she stepped in; before it drove off they would yet exchange a few confidential and incoherent remarks interrupted by gay laughter. Morality—fashionable morality—was satisfied, so long as the lover did not drive off in the same carriage, though a few minutes later they might meet again at some rendezvous.

When Clementina reached home it was half-past six o'clock. The driver whistled; the porter came out of his lodge and opened the gate first, and then the door of the hackney coach. He paid the man. The lady, without uttering a syllable, went through the garden, which though small was exquisitely kept, and up the outside steps of white marble, screened by a verandah, which extended across half the front of the house. The house itself was not very large, but handsome and artistic, of white stone and fine brickwork. It had been built by Osorio about four or five years since. As the plans had been fully discussed and considered, the rooms were well arranged, and this made it more comfortable than his brother-in-law's, though that was three or four times as large.

She asked a servant in the anteroom: "Where is Estefania?"

"It is some time since I last saw her, Señora."

She crossed a magnificent hall, lighted by two large lamps with polished vases borne by bronze statues, went along the corridor, and up the stairs leading to the first floor, meeting no one on her way. At the door of the drawing-room leading to her boudoir, she met Fernando, a page of fourteen in a smart livery.

"Estefania?" she asked.

"She must be in the kitchen."

"Tell her to come up at once."

She entered the boudoir, and going up to a long mirror resting on two pillar-feet of gilt wood, she took off her hat.

The room was a small one, hung with blue satin bordered with wreaths in *carton-pierre*. On the chimney-piece, covered also with blue satin, stood a clock and two fine candelabra, the work of a silversmith of the last century. The carpet was white with a blue border; in the middle of the room there was a *causeuse* upholstered in gold colour, the armchairs were gilt, two large feather pillows lay on the floor. In one corner was the mirror, in another a *Pompadour* writing-table of inlaid wood; in the other two were columns covered with velvet, to support the lamps which now lighted the room. On one side this room opened into Clementina's drawing-room, and then into her bedroom. On the other side, a door led into a small drawing-room, where she was at home to her friends on Tuesday afternoons, and where cards were played at night by an intimate circle. Only a few very confidential friends were ever admitted to her boudoir, calling at the hours when she was "Not at home." Here those long and secret colloquies were held which women so greatly relish, in which they pour out their whole mind, with swift transition from the profoundest depths to the frivolities of the day and details of dress and fashion.

Within a few seconds of her taking off her hat Estefania came in. She was a pale young girl, with pretty black eyes; dressed suitably to her rank but with care and finish; over her skirt she wore a holland apron trimmed with white edging.

"You might have been ready for me, child. Where had you hidden yourself?" said her mistress, in a tone at once cross and indifferent.

"I was in the kitchen. I went to put a few stitches into Teresa's skirt; she had torn it on a nail," replied the girl, with affected servility.

Clementina made no reply, absorbed, no doubt, in thought. Standing in front of the mirror to take off her cloak, she gazed at herself with the perennial interest which a pretty woman feels in her own face.

"Did you go to Escobar's?" she asked at length.

"Yes, Señora."

"And what did he say?"

"That he has no silk so thick of that colour, but that he would send for it if the Señora wishes."

"Turura! That journey won't kill him! And to the milliner's?"

"Yes, they will send the caps on Saturday."

"Did you inquire after Father Miguel?"

"No, I had not time. It is such a long way."

"A long way! Why, did you not go in the carriage?"

"No, Señora. Juanito said that the mare was not shod."

"Then why did he not put in one of the Normandy horses?"

"I do not know. Whenever you tell me to take the carriage he finds some excuse."

"So it seems. Never mind, child; I will see to it. What next, Señor Juanito, with your masterful airs?"

But as she glanced up at the maid's face in the glass she thought she noticed something strange about her eyes, and turned round to see her better. In fact, Estefania's eyes were red with weeping.

"You have been crying, child?"

"I—no, Señora, no."

The denial was evidently a subterfuge. The lady had not to press her much to make her confess even the cause of her tears.

"The head cook, Señora," she whimpered out, "who used to take my part—when I say anything he bursts out laughing or says something rude, and the others, of course, as they are jealous because you are good to me, and to flatter the cook—the others laugh too; and because I said I should tell you, he said all manner of horrid things, and turned me out of the kitchen."

"Turned you out! And who is he to turn you out?" exclaimed her mistress vehemently. "Tell him to come here. I must give him a rowing, as well as Juanito, it seems! If we

do not take care, the servants will rule this house instead of the masters."

"Señora, I dare not. If you would send Fernando!"

"Do as you please, but bring him here."

She had worked herself up into high wrath at the girl's story. Estefania was her favourite, whom she petted above all the other servants, and made the confidant of many of her secrets. The girl's fawning and flattery had won her heart so completely that, without being aware of it, she had allowed a large part of her will to go with it. It was, in fact, Estefania who ruled the house, since she ruled its mistress. The servant who could not win her good graces might prepare sooner or later to lose his place. And what happened was the necessary result in all such cases: the mistress's favourite was hated by all the rest of the household, not only from envy—the disgraceful passion which exists, in a greater or less degree, in every human being—but also because the nature that is hypocritical and time-serving to superiors, is inevitably haughty and malevolent to inferiors.

The *chef*, on being called by Fernando, to whom Estefania gave the message, soon made his appearance at the door of the boudoir wearing the insignia of his office, to wit, a clean apron and cap, both as white as snow. He was a man of about thirty, with a fresh and not bad-looking face, and large black whiskers. The frown on his brow and the anxious expression in his eyes betrayed that he knew why he had been sent for. Clementina had seated herself on the ottoman. Estefania withdrew into a corner, and when the cook came in she fixed her eyes on the floor.

"I hear, Cayetano, that after behaving very rudely to my maid, you turned her out of the kitchen. I have, therefore, sent for you to tell you that I will not allow any servant to behave badly to another; nor are you permitted to turn any one out so long as you are in my house."

"Señora, I did nothing to her. It is she who treats us all badly—teasing one and nagging at another, till there

is no peace," the cook replied, with a strong Gallician accent.

"Well, even if she teases one and nags at another, you have not any right to insult her. She is to tell me, and there is an end of it," replied his mistress sharply, and mimicking his accent.

"But you see——"

"I see nothing. You hear what I say; there is an end of it," and she waved her hand imperiously.

The cook, with his face scarlet and quivering with rage, stood without stirring for a few seconds. Then, before he withdrew, he boldly fixed his wrathful gaze on the girl, who kept her eyes on the carpet with a bland hypocrisy which betrayed the triumph of her self-importance.

"Tell-tale!" he said, spitting out the words rather than speaking them.

The lady rose from her seat, and, bursting with rage at this want of respect, she exclaimed:

"How dare you insult her before my face? Go, instantly. Get out of my sight!"

"Señora, what I say is, that the fault is hers."

"So much the better. Go!"

"We will all go—out of the house, Señora. We can none of us put up with that impudent minx!"

"You go forthwith, as though you had never come! You may find yourself another place, for I will never allow any servant to get the upper hand of me."

The cook, in some dismay at this prompt dismissal, again stood rooted to the spot; but, suddenly recovering himself, he turned on his heel, saying with dignity:

"Very well, Señora, I will."

But when he was gone Clementina still muttered: "An insolent fellow is that Gallician! I don't believe any one but I gets such servants!"

Then, suddenly pacified by a new idea, she said:

"Come, now, I must dress; it is getting late."

She went into her dressing-room, followed by Estefania, who, contrary to what might have been expected, looked grave and gloomy. Clementina hurriedly began to remove her walking-dress and change it for a simple dinner-dress, such as she wore at home to receive a few friends in the evening—always very light in hue, and cut open at the throat, though with long sleeves. At a sign from the mistress the maid brought out a "crushed-strawberry" pink dress from the large wardrobe with mirrors, which lined all one side of the room. Before putting it on she arranged her hair, and exchanged her bronze kid boots for shoes to match the dress. The pale girl meanwhile never opened her lips; her face grew every moment sadder and more anxious. At last, on her knees to put on her mistress's shoes, she raised beseeching eyes to her face and said timidly:

"Señora, may I entreat you—not to send Cayetano away?"

Clementina looked at her in amazement.

"Is that it? After you yourself——"

"The thing is," said Estefania, turning as red as her complexion would allow, "if you send him away the others will take offence."

"And what does that matter?"

But the girl insisted very earnestly with urgent and persuasive entreaties. For a time the lady refused, but as the matter was unimportant, and she perceived, not without surprise, the interest and even anxiety of her favourite for the cook's reprieve, she presently yielded, desiring Estefania to make the necessary explanations. On this the girl's face immediately cleared; she was as bright as a bird, and began to help her mistress to dress very deftly and briskly.

Two taps at the door made them both start.

"Who is there?" called the lady.

"Are you dressing, Clementina?" was asked from outside.

It was her husband's voice. Her surprise was not the

less; Osorio very rarely came to her rooms when she was alone.

"Yes, I am dressing. Is there any one downstairs?"

"As usual—Lola, Pascuala and Bonifacio. I want to speak to you. I will wait for you here in the drawing-room."

"Very well; I will come."

Until her toilet was complete Clementina spoke no more; her expression was one of gloomy anticipation, which her maid could not fail to observe. Her fingers, as she gave the last touches to the folds of her skirt, trembled a little, like those of a young lady dressing for her first ball.

Osorio was, in fact, waiting for her in the little drawing-room beyond the boudoir. He was lounging at his ease in an arm-chair, but, on seeing his wife, he rose, and dropped the end of the cigar he was smoking into the spittoon. Clementina saw that he was paler than usual. He was the same neat and dapper little man, with a bad complexion, as when he had married; but in the course of these twelve years his temper had been greatly spoiled. He had many wrinkles on his face, his hair and beard were streaked with grey, and his eyes had lost their brightness. He closed the door which his wife had left open, and going up to her said, with affected ease: "My cashier handed me to-day a cheque from you, for fifteen thousand pesetas. Here it is."

He took out his pocket-book, and from it a half-sheet of scented satin paper which he held out to her. She looked at it for a moment with a grave and gloomy face, but did not wince. She said not a word.

"A fortnight ago he gave me one for nine thousand. Here it is." The same proceedings, the same silence.

"Last month there were three: one for six thousand, one for eleven thousand, and one for four thousand. Here they are."

Osorio flourished the handful of papers before his wife's eyes: then, as this did not unlock her lips, he asked: "Do you acknowledge it?"

"Acknowledge what?" she said, shortly.

"That these documents are correct."

"They are, no doubt, if they bear my signature. I have a bad memory, especially for money matters."

"A happy gift," he replied with an ironical smile, as he went through the papers in his pocket-book. "I, too, have often tried to forget them. Unfortunately my cashier makes it his business to refresh my memory. Well," he went on as his wife said no more, "I came up solely to ask you a question—namely: Do you suppose that things can go on like this?"

"I do not understand."

"I will explain. Do you suppose that you can go on drawing on my account every few days such sums as these?"

Clementina, who had been pale at first, had coloured crimson.

"You know better than I."

"Why better? You ought to know the amount of your fortune."

"Well, but I do not know," she replied, sharply.

"Nothing can be more simple. The six hundred thousand dollars which your father paid over when we were married, being invested in real estate, produce, as you may see by the books, about twenty-two thousand dollars a year. The expenses of the house, without counting my private outlay, amounts to about three times as much. You can surely draw your own conclusions."

"If you are vexed at your money being spent you can sell the houses," said Clementina with scornful brevity, her colour fading to paleness again.

"But if they were sold I should none the less be responsible for the whole value. You know that?"

"I will sign you any paper you like, saying that I hold you responsible for nothing."

"That is not enough, my dear. The law will never release me from responsibility for your fortune, so long as I have any

money. Moreover, if you spend it in pleasure"—and he emphasised the word—"it may be all very well for you, but deplorable for me, because I shall still be compelled to supply you with—necessaries."

"To keep me, in short?" she said with a bitter intonation.

"I wished to avoid the word; but it is no doubt exact."

Osorio spoke in an impertinent and patronising tone, which piqued his wife's pride in every possible way. Ever since the violent differences which had led to their separation under the same roof, they had had no such important interview as this. When, in the course of daily life, they came into collision, matters were smoothed over with a short explanation, in which both parties, without compromising their pride, used some prudence for fear of a scandal. But the present question touched Osorio in a vital part. To a banker money is the chief fact in life.

His personal pride, too, had suffered greatly in the last few years, though he had not confessed it. It was not enough to feign indifference and disdain of his wife's misconduct; it was not enough to pay her back in her own coin, by flaunting his mistresses in her face and making a parade of them in public. Both fought with the same weapons, but a woman can inflict with them far deeper wounds than a man. The misery he suffered from his wife's disreputable life did not diminish as time went on; the gulf which parted them grew wider and deeper. And so revenge was ready to seize this opportunity by the forelock.

Clementina looked him in the face for a moment. Then, shrugging her shoulders and with a contemptuous curl of her lips, she turned on her heel and was about to leave the room. Osorio stepped forward between her and the door.

"Before you go you must understand that the cashier has my orders to pay you no cheques that do not bear my signature."

"I understand."

"For your regular expenses I will allow a fixed sum on which we will agree. But I can have no more surprises on the cash-box."

Clementina, who had been about to quit the room by the ante-chamber, turned to go to her boudoir. Before leaving the room she held the curtain a moment in her hand, and facing her husband she said, with concentrated rage, "In that you are as mean a cur as your brother-in-law, only he never made believe, like you, to be generous."

She dropped the curtain, and slammed the door in his face.

Osorio made as though to follow her; but he instantly stopped short and yelled, rather than spoke, so she might hear him:

"Oh, yes! I am a mean cur, because I do not choose to maintain a crew of hungry puppies. I leave that to the hags who choose to pet them!"

This brutal speech seemed to have eased his mind, for his lips wore a smile of triumphant sarcasm.

Five minutes later they were both in the dining-room, laughing and jesting with a small party of guests.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE DUKE DE REQUENA REWARDED VIRTUE.

"Let me see, let me see. Explain yourself."

"Señor Duque, the matter is as clear as possible. I spoke with Regnault to-day. If the furnaces are altered, a few roads made, and proper machinery set up, the mine can be made to yield half as much again as it now does. It may be as much as sixty thousand flasks of mercury. The outlay needed to produce these results would not exceed a hundred to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"That seems to me a great deal."

"A great deal for such a result?"

"No, that seems to me a great many flasks."

"But I have no doubt that what Regnault says is true. He is an intelligent and practical engineer. He worked for six years in California; and, indeed, the English engineer said the same."

The persons holding this discourse were Requena and his secretary, or head-clerk, or whatever he called himself, since he had no particular style or title in the household. He was known only by his name—Llera. He was an Asturian, tall and bony, with a colourless, hard-featured face, enormously long arms and legs, and large hands and feet. His manner was rough and awkward; his eyes, which were fine, had a frank, honest look, and were bright with energy and intelligence. He was an indefatigable, an amazing worker. No one knew when he ate or slept. When he made his appearance at eight in the morning, he brought with him as

much work ready done as most men get through in a day, and at midnight he might often still be seen in his office, pen in hand.

Salabert, having the gift of judging men, without which no one makes a great success in the world, had discovered Llera's intelligence and character after employing him for a short while as an underling, and without giving him any showy position —which was not at all his way—he made him a responsible one, by accumulating in his hands all the most important business of the house. He very soon was the great banker's confidential man, the soul of the business. His laborious industry put all the other employés to shame, and Salabert took advantage of it to load him with work after regular hours. Llera was at the same time his private secretary, his steward, the head clerk of the office, the inspector of all the works he had in construction, and the agent in most of his transactions. And for doing all this inconceivable amount of work—more than four men of average industry would have got through—he paid him six thousand pesetas a year. The man thought himself well paid, remembering that only six years ago he was earning but twelve hundred and fifty.

Every day, before taking his morning walk and paying his round of business calls, Requena looked into Llera's office, made inquiries as to things in general, and chatted with him for a longer or shorter time according to circumstances.

The Duke's offices were at the top of his palace in the Avenue de Luchana, a magnificent mansion, standing in the midst of a garden which for extent was worthy to be called a park. In the spring the dense foliage of the fine old trees almost hid the white tops of the turrets; in winter the numbers of firs and evergreens which grew there, still gave it a pleasant verdure. It was the meeting-place of all the birds in that quarter of the city. The entrance to the house was up a large flight of marble steps; above the ground floor, where the reception-rooms were, and the dining-room, there were three storeys, and the Duke's offices, which were not large, filled part

only of the upper floor. They were large enough for Salabert, who conducted his affairs from thence, with the help of a dozen expert clerks.

The luxury displayed in the house was amazing; the furniture and fittings were almost priceless. This was not in keeping with the avarice with which the master was generally credited; but this and other contradictions will be explained as we become better acquainted with his character, which was curious enough to be well worthy of study.

The kitchens were in the basement, roomy and well-fitted; the dining-room, at the back of the house, opened into a conservatory of vast dimensions, filled with exotic shrubs and flowers, where water was laid on to form little pools and waterfalls of charming effect and imitating nature as closely as possible. The picture-gallery was in a separate building at the end of the garden, and in another some of the servants slept, but not all.

The Duke, occupying the only chair in Llera's office, while the secretary stood in front of him twirling a large pair of scissors used for cutting paper, turned his wet cigar three or four times from one corner of his mouth to the other, and made no reply to the clerk's last words. At last he growled rather than said:

"Humph! The Ministry grows more pig-headed every day."

"What does that matter. You know the secret of making it give way. Telegraph to Liverpool, and within a fortnight the price of mercury will have fallen from sixty to forty dollars the flask."

About four years since, Requena, at Llera's suggestion and advice, had formed a company or syndicate for buying up all the mercury which should come into the market. Thanks to these tactics, the price of this product had gone up wonderfully. The company had now an enormous stock in hand at Liverpool; Llera's scheme was to throw this into the market at a given moment and so produce a great fall in the price, which would frighten the Government. This, which was to be done

at the moment when the Government was about to repay a loan of fifteen million dollars borrowed ten years since of a foreign house, would reduce them to selling the mines of Riosa. If Requena was then prepared to pull the affair through at the sacrifice of a few thousands, to subsidise the press, and bribe certain individuals, he might be certain of success. This project, conceived of by Llera, and matured by the Duke, had run its due course, and was now near the final *coup*.

"Well, we shall see," said the rich man, and after meditating a few minutes he went on: "When the mines are for sale it will be necessary to form another company. The Mercury Syndicate will not serve our turn."

"Of course!"

"The thing is that I do not want to sink more than eight million pesetas in this concern."

"That is a different matter," said Llera, becoming very serious. "It does not seem to me possible to keep the control of such a business with so small a stake in it. The management will slip into other hands, and the profits will soon be reduced to so much per cent., more or less—that is to say, a mere nothing."

"Very true, very true," mumbled Salabert, again falling into deep thought. Llera too remained silent and pensive.

"I have already explained to you the only way of keeping the concern in your own hands," said he.

This way consisted in securing a sufficiently large number of shares in the mine which the company was to purchase, and to go on buying up as many as possible; then to throw them into the market at so low a price as to alarm the shareholders. Thus to buy and sell at a loss for some time was Llera's plan for bringing down the price of the shares, when he could acquire half the shares *plus* one, for much less money, and be master of the whole concern.

To Salabert this was not so clear as to his clerk. His intellect was keen and far-seeing, but he lacked breadth of view and initiative, though those who saw him boldly under-

take ventures of vast scope were apt to think that he had them. The first conception, the mother idea, of a new concern scarcely ever originated in his brain. It came to him from outside; but once sown there it germinated and developed as it would have done in no other in Spain. By degrees he analysed it, or rather dissected it, laying bare its inmost fibres, contemplating it from all sides; and once convinced that it would prove advantageous, he launched it with the rare and surprising audacity which had so greatly deceived the public as to his gifts as a speculator. He was perfectly convinced that when once he had made up his mind to an enterprise, vacillation must be fatal. Still, this boldness proceeded not from his temperament but from reflection; it was the outcome of extreme astuteness.

Otherwise he was by nature timid, and this weakness, instead of diminishing under the almost invariable success of his undertakings, increased as time went on. Avarice is always suspicious and full of alarms, and Salabert grew more and more avaricious. Also, as a man grows older, it is a rule without exceptions, that pessimism soaks into his mind. Our banker, accustomed to grand results from his speculations, regarded any concern in which the profits were small as altogether deplorable; if by any chance they were *nil*, or he even lost a trifle, he thought it a matter for serious lamentation. Thus, but for Llera, with his bold temperament and fertile imagination, the Duke de Requena would not, for some years past, have ventured on any concern of even moderate extent. On the other hand, what he had lost in dash and resource he had made good by really astounding tact and skill, and a knowledge of men which can be acquired only by years of unremitting study. Thus it may be said that he and Llera complemented each other to perfection.

Salabert's sagacity and knowlege of human nature sometimes erred by excess; now and then he was caught in his own trap. In his dealings with men, studying them always from the point of view of substantial interest, he had formed so poor

an opinion of them, that it became monstrous, and led him into serious mistakes. Perhaps, after all, what he saw in others was no more than the reflection of himself; to this error we are all liable. To him every man and woman had a price; a cheap conscience or a dear one, but all alike for sale. Of late years his faith in bribery had become a passion. If he came across any one who would not yield to money, he never suspected it could be in good faith, but only supposed the price was higher than his bid.

One of Llera's hardest tasks was to get such schemes of bribery out of his master's head when he had to do with men who would have rejected it with indignation. If he were engaged in a law-suit, the first thing he thought of was how much it would cost him to bribe the judge who would decide it; if he were concerned in a government transaction, he calculated the sum to be handed over to the Minister, or the Under-Secretary, or the Councillors of State. Unluckily, he not unfrequently made practical use of the black-lead he had always ready to disfigure the face of humanity with.

Requena had absolutely no moral sense, and never had known what it was. His life, as a nameless waif in Valencia, had been characterised by a series of tricks and dodges, and such a lively inventiveness of means for extracting coin from his fellow-creatures, as made him worthy to compare with the favourite heroes of Spanish romance. In fact the name of one of them, *El picaro Guzman*, had actually been bestowed on Salabert as a nickname by some wags of his acquaintance, but they kept it to themselves.

It was told of him with apparent truth that when he was in Cuba, whither he went to seek his fortune, he bought a tavern with all its furniture, including a negro woman who managed the business. This negress, for all the time he remained, was his servant, his housekeeper, his slave and his concubine, by whom he had several children. When he had saved some thousands of dollars to return to Spain, he squared his petty accounts by selling the tavern, the furniture, the black woman, and the children.

Then he took army contracts, speculated in tobacco, government loans and tenders for roads; these he sometimes sold again at a premium, and sometimes carried out the works without any regard to the conditions of the contract. But in all he did he displayed his wonderful capacity, his practical sagacity, and so large a development of the organ of acquisitiveness, as made him a man of mark among bankers.

He was not disagreeable to deal with, though, unlike most men who aspire to wealth or power, his manners were not smooth nor his language choice. He was brusque rather than courteous, but he was keen in the distinction of persons, and could be very civil when he must. The natural abruptness of his manners served him well to disguise the subtle astuteness of his mind. That blunt, straightforward air, that exaggerated freedom and provincial rusticity, could only cover a frank and loyal heart. To the outside world he was the perfect type of the old Castilian school, freespoken, downright and impertinent. He would be loquacious or taciturn as suited his purpose, expressed himself with real or affected difficulty—which, no one ever could discover—could sometimes jest with some wit, but with unfailing coarseness, and was wont to say such detestable things to the face of friend or foe as made him a terror in drawing-rooms. The importance his wealth conferred on him had encouraged this defect: he talked to most people, even to ladies, with a plainness which verged on cynicism and grossness.

Nevertheless, when he came across a person of political importance whom he desired to propitiate, this bluntness vanished and became flattery that was almost servile. But the farce, however well played, deceived no one. The Duke of Requena was regarded as a very wily old fox; no one believed a word he said, or allowed himself to be deluded by that blunt *bonhomie.* Those who had dealings with him were on their guard even when feigning confidence and satisfaction. Still, as always happens with a man who has succeeded in raising himself, the faults which every one recognised—or to

be exact, his ill-fame--did not hinder his neighbours from respecting him, talking to him hat in hand and with a smile on their lips, even when they had no need of him. Men not unfrequently humble themselves for the mere pleasure of it. Salabert well knew this innate tendency of the human spine to bend, and took unfair advantage of it. Many men in quite independent circumstances not only took from him impertinence which they would have thought intolerable in their oldest friend, but even sought his society.

"We will see, we will see," he repeated, when Llera recapitulated the scheme for getting sole control of the mines. "You are too full of fancies. Your head is too hot. That does not do in business. We must take care not to get into the same scrape as we did with the granaries."

By Llera's advice the banker had constructed granaries in some of the principal towns of Spain, and they had not proved such a success as had been hoped. However, as the undertaking had been on a moderate scale the losses, too, had not been great. But the Duke, who had bewailed them as though they had been enormous, and had not spared his secretary much gross insult, was always reminding him of the disaster. It served him as a weapon when he wished to depreciate Llera's schemes, though he would afterwards avail himself of them, and owed to them considerable additions to his wealth. By such means he kept him in subjection, ignorant of his real value, and ready to undertake any task however disagreeable.

Llera, though somewhat mortified by this reminder, still insisted that the transaction now under consideration would infallibly succeed if it were conducted on the lines he had suggested. Salabert abruptly closed the discussion by changing the subject. He briefly inquired into the business of the day. The loss of some money he had advanced for a relation in Valencia put him into a frantic rage; he stamped and fumed like a bull stung by the darts, called himself a thousand fools,

and actually had the face to declare, in Llera's presence, that his good nature would be the ruin of him. The whole loss amounted to about four or five thousand dollars. The form of loan which Requena adopted to his most intimate friends was this: he paid the sum usually in paper, demanding six per cent. on the securities deposited, and besides this he himself cut off the coupons, and claimed the dividends. So that the securities, instead of bringing in the net interest, yielded him six per cent. more. These were the dealings to which he was prompted, not by interest, but by kindness of heart!

He left Llera's office in a state of fury, went to the counting-room, and learning there that it was necessary to draw on the bank for nine thousand dollars in currency, he himself took charge of the cheque, after having signed it; he would have to go there to a meeting of directors, and it would be no trouble to him as he passed to get it cashed.

He went out on foot, as was his custom in the morning. The birds were singing in the beautiful trees which bordered the walks. It was quite clear that they had incurred no bad debts. The Duke cursed their foolish trick of singing, and would not listen to their gleeful trills. He walked on slowly with a gloomy scowl, taking no notice of the greetings of the gardeners and the gate-keeper, biting his huge cigar with more than usual viciousness. In the street, however, his face somewhat recovered its tone. He had a pleasant and useful meeting with the President of the Council of State, who likewise was fond of an early walk, and who bowed to him in the Avenue de Recoletos; they stood talking for a few minutes, and he availed himself of the opportunity of recommending to the President, with the intentional bluntness which he affected, the prospectus of certain salt-marshes in which he was interested. Then, at a deliberate pace, gazing with his prominent, guileless eyes at the passers by, and more especially at the fresh damsels hastening home from market with their baskets loaded, and their cheeks rosy from the effort, he proceeded to the Bank of Spain. Numbers of persons lifted their hats to

him, now and again he paused for a moment, shook hands with one or another, and after exchanging a few words with an acquaintance, went on his way.

It was still early. Before reaching the Bank, it occurred to him that he would go to see his friend and connection Calderón, whose warehouse and counting-house were in the Calle de San Felipe Neri, still in the state in which his father had left them—that is to say, very poverty-stricken, not to say dirty and squalid. In these quarters, where the light filtered in through panes darkened by dust and protected by clumsy ironwork, and where the smell of hides was perfectly sickening, old Calderón with mechanical regularity had accumulated dollar on dollar, till several piles of a million each had formed there. His son Julian had made no change. Though he was one of the wealthiest bankers in Madrid he had not given up the hide warehouse and the small profits which this business brought in—small as compared with those on securities and stocks which the banking house dealt in.

Calderón was a banker of a different type from Salabert. He was of an essentially conservative temper, timid in speculation, always preferring small profits to large when there was any risk. His intelligence was somewhat limited, cautious, hesitating and circumspect. Every new undertaking struck him as madness. When he saw a friend embarking on one he smiled maliciously, and congratulated himself on the superior shrewdness with which he was gifted; if it turned out well he would shake his head, saying with determined forboding: "Those who laugh last, laugh longest." At home he was parsimonious, nay stingy to a scandal; and though the house was kept on a comparatively luxurious footing, this was partly the result of his wife's entreaties, and the raillery of his friends, but even more of his conviction, slowly formed, that some external prestige was indispensable, if he was to compete with the numbers of skilful financiers established in the capital. But after having bought good furniture, he insisted on such care being taken of it, such refinements of

precaution on the part of the servants and his wife and children, that they were really the slaves of these costly possessions. Then with regard to the carriage, it is impossible to imagine the anxieties and agitations without end which it cost him. Every time the coachman told him that a horse wanted shoeing it was a fresh worry. He had a pair of French mares of some value, and he loved them as he loved his children, or more. He drove them out of an evening; but never to go to the theatre for fear of cold; he would rather see his wife walk or take a hired carriage than expose them to any risk. And if one of them really fell ill, there are no words for our banker's state of mind; anxiety and dejection were written in his face. He went frequently to see the animal, patted and petted her, and would often assist the coachman and the vet. in applying the remedies, however unpleasant. Till the invalid had recovered no one in the house had any peace.

As a husband he was most officious; but in this he was hardly to blame. His wife's apathy was such that if he had not taken charge of the kitchen accounts and the store-cupboard keys, God knows how the house would have been kept. Mariana did nothing and gave no orders. Any other woman would have felt humiliated by finding herself obliged to refer to her husband at every moment for the most trifling details of domestic life, but she took it quite as a matter of course, and found it most convenient, when Calderón's stinginess did not make itself too pressingly felt. Her part was that of a child in the house, and she was quite content to play it.

The person who sometimes dumbly rebelled against the exclusive centralisation of all administrative power in the master's hands was Mariana's mother, the diminutive lady with deep set eyes, of whom mention was made in the first chapter. Her protests indeed were neither frequent nor lengthy. At heart she and her son-in-law were in perfect agreement. The old woman, the widow of a provincial merchant, who herself had helped in saving his capital, was even more devoted to order and economy than Calderón

himself—that is to say, more sordidly thrifty. For this reason she never would have endured to live with her son; his expensive tastes, and, yet more, Clementina's extravagance and disreputable caprices enraged her, and would have embittered every moment of her life. In Calderón's house she was inspector or spy over the servants, and she filled the part to admiration. Her son-in-law could rest in confidence, and thanks to this and to his expectation that Mariana would be enriched by her will, he showed far more consideration for her than for his wife.

Salabert was at heart not less covetous than Calderón, and hardly less timid; but his intellect was very superior, his cowardice was counterbalanced by a strong infusion of bounce, and his avarice by a profound knowledge of mankind. He knew very well that the paraphernalia and ostentation of wealth have a marked influence on the minds of the most indifferent, and contribute in a great measure to inspire the confidence without which no important enterprise can prosper. Hence the luxury in which he lived—his palace, his servants, and the famous balls he occasionally gave to the fashionable world of Madrid. For Calderón he had a profound contempt, though at the same time his society put him into a good humour. As he contemplated his friend's inferiority he swelled in his own esteem, regarding himself as a greater man than he really was, and deriving from it the liveliest satisfaction. He not only judged himself to have more cleverness and astuteness—the only superior qualities he really possessed—but, to be, by comparison, generous and liberal, almost a prodigy.

Panting and puffing he went into the dark warehouse in the Calle de San Felipe Neri, producing the usual effect of amazing, crushing, annihilating the clerks of the house, to whom the Duke de Requena was not merely the greatest man in Spain, but a quite supernatural being. His visit impressed them with the same reverence and enthusiasm, awe and adoration, as the appearance of the Mikado arouses in the Japanese. And if they did not prostrate themselves with their foreheads

in the dust, they coloured up to their ears, and for some minutes they could not put pen to paper, nor attend to the requirements of a customer. They looked at each other with awe-stricken eyes, repeating in an undertone, what indeed they all knew: "The Duke!" "The Duke!"

The Duke passed in, as usual when he by chance called there, without vouchsafing them a glance, and made his way to the little room where Calderón sat. Long before reaching him, he began shouting: "Caramba, Julian! When do you mean to get out of this hole? This is not a banking-house, it is a stye. Are you not ashamed to be seen here? Poof! Do you skin the beasts here, or what? The stink is intolerable."

Calderón's private room was beyond the front office, a mere closet, separated from the rest by a partition of painted wood, with a spring door. Thus he could hear all that his friend was saying, before Salabert reached him.

"What do you expect, man?" said he, somewhat nettled at his clerks being made the confidants of this philippic. "We are not all dukes, trampling millions under foot."

"Millions! Does it need millions to keep an office clean and comfortable? You had better confess that you cannot bear to spend a peseta in making yourself decent. I have told you many times, Julian, you are poor, and you will be poor all your days. I should be richer with a thousand pence than you with a thousand dollars—because I know how to spend them."

Calderón grumbled a protest and went on with his work. The Duke, without taking his hat off, dropped into the only easy chair, covered with white buckskin, or which ought to have been white, for it was of a doubtful hue now, between yellow and greenish-grey, with black patches where heads and hands were wont to rest. There were besides three or four stools covered with the same material, in the same state, a book-case full of bundles of papers, a small cash-box, an ancient walnut-wood writing-table covered with oil-cloth, and

behind the table a greasy, shabby arm-chair in which the head of the house sat enthroned. This small room was lighted by a barred window, to ward off the prying looks of passers-by; there were blinds, which, being the cheapest and commonest of their kind, had this peculiarity, that one was much too wide and the other so short that it did not cover the lower pane by at least a quarter.

"Why in the world don't you quit this blessed leather-shop, which is not worthy of a man of your position and fortune?"

"Fortune—fortune!" muttered Calderón with his eyes still fixed on the paper he was writing on. "People talk of my fortune I know, but if I were compelled to liquidate, who knows what would come of it?"

Calderón never confessed his wealth; he loved to crawl; any allusion to his riches annoyed him beyond measure. Salabert, on the contrary, loved to flourish his millions in the face of the world, and play the nabob, at the smallest possible cost of course.

"Besides," Calderón went on with some acerbity, "every one looks at what comes in and never thinks of what goes out. Our expenses are greater every day. Have you any idea, now, of what our private expenditure has been this year? Come."

"Nothing much," replied Requena, with a depreciating smile.

"Nothing much? Why it amounts to more than seventy-five thousand dollars, and we are only in November."

"What do you say?" exclaimed the Duke greatly astonished. "Impossible!"

"As I tell you."

"Come, come; do not try to throw dust in my eyes, Julian. Unless you include in the seventy-five thousand the cost of the house you are building in Calle Homo de la Mata."

"Why, of course."

At this Salabert burst into such a fit of laughing that he seemed about to choke; the cigar dropped out of his mouth,

his face, usually so pale, turned so red as to be alarming, and the fit of coughing which ensued was so violent that it threatened him with congestion.

"My dear fellow, I thank you! That is really delicious," he gasped between coughing and laughing. "I never thought of that before. Henceforth I will include in my household expenses all the paper I buy and the houses I build. I shall have accounts like a king's to show."

The Duke's hearty and uproarious mirth annoyed and piqued Calderón out of all measure.

"I really do not see what you are laughing at. The money goes out of the cash-box under the head of expenditure. And, at any rate, Antonio, a fool knows more of his own affairs than a wise man knows of his neighbours'."

The Duke's visits to his friend had of late been somewhat frequent. He had been hovering round him a good deal to tempt him into the mining speculation. The moment was drawing near when the sale must come on, and meanwhile he was anxious to secure the co-operation of some of the more important shareholders. Don Julian was one, not merely by reason of the capital he represented, but by the position he held. He enjoyed the reputation in the financial world of being a very cautious, or indeed suspicious man; thus his name as participator in a speculation was a guarantee of its security, and this was what Salabert required. So he was anxious not to vex him seriously, and changed the subject. With the curious suppleness and cunning which lay beneath his abrupt roughness, he managed to put him in a good humour by praising his foresight in a certain case when he would not be caught, reflecting on the folly of some rival dealers, and implying Calderón's superior skill and penetration. When he had got him into the right frame of mind he spoke, for the third or fourth time, in vague terms, of the mining company. He mentioned it as an unattainable vision, just to whet his friend's appetite.

"If they only could buy up the mine one of these days,

what a stroke of business that would be! He had never in his life met with a better. Unfortunately the Government were not disposed to sell. However—damn it all! By a little good management and steady perseverance, in time perhaps—meanwhile what was wanted were a few men who could afford to invest a good round sum. If they were not to be found in Spain they must be sought elsewhere."

At the mere notion of a speculation Calderón shrank as a snail does when it is touched. And this was so big a thing, to judge from the vague hints the Duke threw out, that he completely disappeared into his shell. Then, when Salabert spoke rather more plainly, he turned gloomy and dull, uneasy and suspicious, as if he expected to be bled there and then of an exorbitant sum.

When Requena had finished a long and rather incoherent speech, which was almost a monologue, he abruptly rose:

"Ta ta, Julianito, I am off to the Bank."

He took out a fresh cigar, and without offering one to Calderón, who did not smoke, he lighted it for form's sake; but he at once let it go out and began chewing it as usual.

Don Julian gave a sigh of relief.

"Always in a state of feverish activity," said he with a smile, holding out his hand. "Always on the track of money!"

Just as he reached the door Calderón remembered that he might make something out of this visit.

"I say, Antonio, I have a heap of Londrès. Do you want them? I will let you have them cheap."

"No, I don't want any at present. What do you ask for them?"

"Forty-seven."

"Are there many of them?"

"Eight thousand pounds in all."

"Well, I really don't want them, but it is a good bargain. Good-bye."

He went to the Bank, assisted at the meeting, and after

cashing his cheque for nine thousand dollars, went out with his friend Urreta, another of the great Madrid bankers. On reaching the Puerta del Sol they shook hands to part.

"Which way are you going?" asked Salabert.

"I am going to Calderón's office to see if he happens to be able to help me to some Londrès."

"Quite useless," said the other promptly. "I have just bought up all he had."

"That is unlucky. What did you give for them?"

"Forty-seven ten."

"Not very cheap. But I need them badly, so I should have taken them."

"Do you really need them?" said Salabert, putting his arm on the other's shoulders.

"I do indeed."

"Then I will be your Providence. How many do you want?"

"A large quantity, at least ten thousand pounds."

"Oh I cannot do that, but I can send you eight thousand this evening."

Urreta's face beamed with a grateful smile.

"My dear fellow, I cannot allow it. You want them yourself."

"Not so much as you do, and even if I did, you know my regard for you. You are the only Guipuzcoan of brains I ever met with," and as he spoke he patted him affectionately on the shoulder. They shook hands once more, Urreta pouring out a flood of grateful speeches, to which Salabert replied with the rough frankness which so greatly enhanced the merits of any service he might render; then they parted.

The Duke instantly got into a coach from the stand. "Go to Calle de San Felipe Neri, No. ——."

"Yes, Señor Duque."

"The Duke raised his head to look at the man.

"So you know me?" and without waiting for a reply, he jumped in and shut the door.

"Julian, Julian," he shouted to his friend before opening the door into Calderón's office. "I have come to do you a service. You are in luck, you wretch! Send me home those Londrès."

"Ha, ha!" exclaimed Julian with a triumphant smile. "So you want them?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, yes. I always want the thing you want to get rid of. Good-bye."

And without going into the little office, he let go of the spring door he had held open, and left. He desired the coachman to drive to a house in one of the northern quarters of the city, and reclined in a corner, munching his cigar and smoking with evident gratification. For our banker felt as much satisfaction after committing this piece of rascality, after cheating his friend of so many pesetas, as the righteous man knows after doing an act of justice or charity, His imagination, always on the alert when money might be made, wandered over the various concerns in which he was engaged, and the vehicle meanwhile carried him on towards the Hippodrome. More especially he dwelt on the mines of Riosa; the longer he thought of Llera's scheme, the better it pleased him. Still, it had its weak points, and he meditated on the means of fortifying them.

It was not yet late. Salabert had time still to pay one of those unavowed visits which form an item in the social round of many a man whose virtues are more conspicuous, and whose vices less blatant than his. He dismissed the coach he had hired, and, his call paid, he walked home.

As soon as he found himself in his private room, he put his hand in his pocket to take out his note-book. His face, which had shone with satisfaction at the consciousness of carrying about with him the golden key to every pleasure on earth, suddenly fell. A cloud of anxiety came over it. He felt more thoroughly. The pocket-book was not there. He tried all his other pockets. The same result.

"Damnation," he muttered, "I have been robbed. Robbed

of ten thousand odd dollars. Curse my ill luck! If a day begins badly—three thousand dollars gone in a bad debt, and now nearly eleven thousand in a lump! A pretty morning's work I must say!"

He started to his feet and rang the bell vehemently for Llera. When the factotum appeared, he was walking up and down the room, strangely excited for a man who owned so many millions. He explained the case to the clerk. A torrent of words, growls, foul expletives, poured from his lips, and he flung away his half-chewed cigar, a sign of excessive disturbance.

"Possibly, Señor, you have not been robbed," Llera suggested, "you may have lost it. Where have you been?"

But this was a question the Duke was not prepared to answer.

"Damn it, what concern is that of yours?" he replied. "Do you suppose I am likely to have lost eleven thousand dollars? That is to say, lost them—of course I have. But some one else found them before they touched the ground."

"The best thing you can do, Señor Duque, is to let me go over the ground wherever you have been."

"I will go myself after luncheon. Go, if you have nothing else to suggest but calling on all my acquaintances."

Requena went downstairs, dismaying the house like a bombshell, not indeed of powder or dynamite, since uproariousness was not part of his nature, but of sulphuric acid or corrosive sublimate, which trickled into every corner and annoyed and burnt every one in turn. His wife, his lodge-keeper, his cook, Llera, and almost every one of his clerks, had some coarse insult flung in their teeth, in the tone of cynical brutality which he affected. After luncheon he was about to go out on his quest, when a servant came to tell him that a hackney coachman wished to speak with him.

"What does he want?"

"I do not know. He said he wanted to see the Duke."

Salabert, with a sudden flash of intuition, said:

"Show him up."

The man who came in was the driver of the coach which had conveyed him from Calderón's office to his mistress's house. The Duke looked at him anxiously.

"What is it?"

"This, Señor Duque, which is your excellency's no doubt," said the man, holding out the pocket-book.

The Duke seized it, hastily opened it, and shaking out the pile of bank notes it contained, counted them with the skill and rapidity of a practised hand. When he had done, he said:

"All right; there are none missing."

The man, who had no doubt looked for some reward, stood still for a minute or two.

"It is all right, my good fellow, quite right. Many thanks."

Then the poor man, with angry disappointment stamped on his face, turned to go, muttering good-day. The Duke looked at him with cruel humour, and before he had reached the door called after him with deliberate sarcasm:

"Look here, my man, I give you nothing, because to so honest a fellow as you the best reward is the satisfaction of having done right."

The coachman, at once puzzled and vexed, looked at him with an indescribable expression. His lips parted as if he were about to speak, but he finally left the room without a word.

CHAPTER V.

PRECIPITANCY.

RAIMUNDO ALCÁZAR—for this was the name of the pertinacious youth who had so provoked Clementina by following her when we first had the honour of making her acquaintance—met the wrathful glance she had fired at him as she went into her sister-in-law's house with perfect and resigned submission. He waited for a moment to see whether she had gone thither merely on a message, and finding she did not come out again, he placidly walked away in the direction of the little Plaza de Santa Cruz. He stopped in front of a flower-stall. The florist smiled as he drew near, recognising him as an old customer, and took up a bouquet of white roses and violets, which no doubt were awaiting him. He then went to the Plaza Mayor, and took the tramcar for Carabanchel. At the turning which leads to the Cemetery of San Isidro he got out and proceeded on foot. On reaching the graveyard he hastily ascended the slope and went into the new enclosure, where, as the law directs, the dead are laid in graves, and not in long vaulted galleries. He went on with a swift step to a tomb covered with a white marble slab, and enclosed by a little railing. There he stopped. For some minutes he stood still, gazing at it. On the stone, in black letters, was the name, *Isabel Martinez de Alcázar*. Below the name, two dates—1842–1883—those, no doubt, of the birth and death of the dead who slept below. A few faded flowers lay there, which Raimundo carefully removed, and untying the bunch he had brought with him, he scattered the fresh blossoms on the grave, and

used the string to tie up the dead ones. With these in one hand and his hat in the other he again stood for some minutes contemplating the spot, with tears in his eyes. Then he walked quickly away without a single curious glance at the other sepultures.

Raimundo Alcázar had lost his mother eight or nine months ago. He had never known his father, or, rather, he had no recollection of him, since he was but four years old at the time of his parent's death. His name, too, had been Raimundo, and at the time of his death he had filled a professor's chair at the University of Segovia. When he had first married he had been a youth waiting for an appointment. Isabel's father, a dealer in forged iron in the Calle de Esparteros, had in consequence refused his consent, and only sanctioned their union when at last Alcázar won the professorship above mentioned. He was a young fellow of exceptional talents, and published some works on geology, the branch of science to which he had devoted himself. His death, at the age of thirty-two, was much lamented in the small circle to whom men of science are known in Spain. Isabel, with her little son, returned to her father's house in Madrid, and there, three months after her husband's death, she gave birth to a daughter, who was baptised by the name of Aurelia.

Isabel was a remarkably handsome woman, and, as the only child of a man who was supposed to be in easy circumstances, she did not lack for suitors. But she refused every offer. Her friends called her romantic, perhaps because she had more mind and heart than they could generally boast of. She appreciated talent, and detested the prosaic beings who almost exclusively constituted her father's social circle. She worshipped the memory of her husband, whom she had adored while he lived, as a man of superior talents; she treasured with the greatest care every eulogy that had appeared in print on his works; the sole desire and aim of her life was that her son should tread in his father's footsteps, and become respected for his talents and eminence. Heaven blessed her aspirations.

At first she saw him growing up before her eyes the living image of his father. Not in face only, but in gesture and voice, he was exactly like him. Then the boy's progress at school caused her the keenest joy. He was intelligent and studious. His masters were always entirely satisfied with him. Every word of praise which came to her ears, every mark of approbation written against his name, gave the poor mother the most exquisite delight. Now she had no doubt that he would inherit his father's gifts.

She was stricken with remorse sometimes when she reflected how far from equitably she divided her affection between her two children. Whatever efforts she might make to preserve the equilibrium, she could not but confess that she loved Raimundo much the best. Her devoted affection was shown in constant petting and small cares, which pampered the boy and weakened his character. She brought him up with excessive fondness. He, on his part, loved her with such exclusive ardour that at times it was almost a fever. Every time he had to leave the shelter of her petticoats to go to school it cost him some tears. He insisted on her watching him from the balcony, and before turning the corner of the street he looked round twenty times to kiss his hand to her. Even when he was grown up and a science-student, Isabel still kept up the habit of going out on the balcony to wave him an adieu when he went to his lectures. Either by nature, or perhaps in consequence of this rather effeminate education, Raimundo was a timid boy, indifferent to the sports of his companions; and he grew up a melancholy youth, and a serious and uncommunicative man. He had scarcely any friends. At college he joined his fellow-students in a walk before going in to lecture but as soon as it was over he went home, and did not care to go out unless with his mother and sister.

Long before that, when he was no more than ten years old his grandfather died. Thus, by the time he was sixteen, he had to play the part of the man in the house. He took his mother to the theatre, accompanied her in paying visits, and

sometimes in the evening, when the weather was fine, he took her out for a walk, giving her his arm like her husband or sweetheart. Isabel's beauty did not desert her with years. Those who saw them together never supposed they could be mother and son, but rather sister and brother, if not a married pair. This was the cause of some distress to the lad. As in Madrid men are not remarkable for respect for the fair sex, he used to overhear, in spite of himself, complimentary speeches, or even bold addresses from the passers-by to his mother. And as he heard them, he felt a strange mixture of shame and pleasure, of jealousy and pride; the position of a son in such a case is extremely peculiar and embarrassing.

Old Martinez, his grandfather, after retiring from business, had lost all his savings. They had been invested partly in a gunpowder-making company which had failed, and partly in Government stock. All he had to leave was an income of from seven to eight thousand pesetas.

On this the three lived very thriftily, though they did not lack the necessaries of life. On a second floor in the Calle de Gravina, Raimundo pursued his scientific studies. He hoped to become a professor, like his father, and, seeing how brilliantly he passed every examination, no one doubted that he soon would attain that position; but, instead of turning his attention to geology, he preferred the study of zoology, and more especially that of butterflies. He began making a collection, and displayed so much eagerness and intelligence that, before long, he was possessed of a very fine one. Before he had left college he was already remarkable as an entomologist. The walls of his room were lined with cabinets, containing the rarest and most precious specimens. For two years he saved up his pocket-money to buy a microscope, and at last was able to purchase a fairly good one, which was as useful as it was delightful. The day he took his doctor's degree, when he was just one-and-twenty, Isabel experienced one of those joys that mothers alone can know. She embraced him, shedding a flood of tears.

"Now, mamma," said he, "I am qualified to compete for a professorship. I shall devote myself to preparing for it, and as soon as I succeed I shall renounce anything you may be able to leave me in favour of Aurelia. I have few wants, and can live on my salary."

These generous words went to the mother's heart; she found fresh reason every day for adoring this model son.

Raimundo now plunged into his studies with ardour, working up the special branches required without neglecting his entomology. Thanks to this, and to the honoured name of his father, he was soon eminent among men of science. He wrote some papers, corresponded with various foreign *savants*, and had the satisfaction of receiving from them the most encouraging praises. He was, it may be said, a happy man. He had no desires for the impossible to devour his soul, no tormenting love-affairs, or intrusive friends; he enjoyed the peace of home-life, the love of his family, and the pure delights of science; his days glided on in tranquillity and happiness. His mother's friends were amazed at such virtuous simplicity. Had Raimundo no love entanglement? Did he not care for women? And Isabel would reply with a smile of evident satisfaction:

"I do not know. I believe he has never yet thought of such a thing. He is so tied to my apron-string that he is like a child of three. He would find it hard, to be sure, to meet with a woman who would love him as I do."

And it was as she said. She kept him wrapped in such an atmosphere of protection, of warm and loving care, as he could never have found with a wife, however devoted she might be. Only mothers have this gift of absolute and unwearying self-sacrifice, never hoping for or dreaming of a return. Raimundo's every need of a practical kind was satisfied with a refined completeness which few men enjoy. He had never known what it was to have to think how he was fed, clothed, and shod, or to take any care for necessaries such as many women do not understand. Every detail of his life was foreseen and arranged

self with greater volubility than usual. This led them to suspect that he was under the influence of some violent excitement, and the suspicion was confirmed when he proposed to play at cards. They yielded, but presently the young fellow began to talk quite at random.

"What do you think of the game, mamma?" he asked of a lady who was playing.

All those present looked at each other with consternation and pity.

After this he became quite incoherent. His excitement increased, he began laughing so wildly that no one could doubt that it must end in a violent nervous attack. And, in fact, when they least expected it, he started from his seat, ran to the window, threw it open, and would have flung himself from the balcony, if they had not stopped him. This ended in acute hysterics, which happily were soon over, and then to collapse, compelling him to remain in bed three or four days.

Time at last exerted its soothing power. At the end of a fortnight he was well again, though a prey to extreme dejection, from which his relations and friends vainly strove to rouse him.

His uncle proposed that the brother and sister should continue to live with him, since Raimundo was young to be at the head of a house, and especially to guard and guide Aurelia. He was now three-and-twenty and she eighteen. But neither of them would listen to the plan. They would live alone and together. They took third floor rooms in the Calle de Serrano, very pretty and sunny, and thither they transferred their furniture; once installed there they continued their former life, sadly, no doubt, under the ever present remembrance of their mother, but calmly and contentedly. Raimundo centred all his thoughts and care in Aurelia. Anxious to fulfil his part as father and protector to the young girl, he did for her what his mother had hitherto done for him, surrounding her with kindness, and cherishing her with a tenderness which touched all who saw them. Aurelia was not beautiful nor particularly

clever, but for her brother she felt the passionate adoration she had inherited from her mother. Nevertheless, in the details of daily life the young man sorely missed his mother. Aurelia did her utmost to prevent his feeling her absence, but she was far from achieving the same delicate anticipation of his needs. By degrees she became more expert in the management of the house, and Raimundo, on his part, did not look for the refined comfort of a past time. The feeling of guardianship, and the consciousness of his own duties towards his sister, made him think less of himself. If, on the other hand, some little attention from Aurelia came to him as a surprise he accepted it as though from a child. Thus their lives supplemented each other.

They lived humbly; their rent came to twenty dollars; they kept a single maid. Thus their little income of twelve hundred dollars was sufficient for their needs. As it was derived from dividends on State securities and shares in a manufactory, it was regularly paid. Raimundo was able to dedicate himself with renewed ardour to his studies; he longed to fulfil to his sister the promise he had made his mother, of renouncing his share of their inheritance, and saving for her a little fortune which might enable her to marry well. Ever since his illness he had gone twice a week to lay flowers on his mother's grave; on Sundays he took Aurelia with him. As a rule he went out very little. The studies requisite to fit him to compete for a professorship on the one hand, and on the other his passion as a collector and naturalist, absorbed almost the whole of his time. It was a wonder indeed if he were seen in a café, and being in mourning he did not go to the play.

One day when he happened to be at a bookseller's in the Carrera San Jeronimo, where he frequently amused himself by turning over new works from abroad, an elegantly dressed woman came into the shop. Raimundo's eyes dilated at the vision, resting on her with such a fixed look of admiration, that she was fain to turn away. While she bought a few French novels he contemplated her with rapture and emotion; the

book he was holding shook in his hand. As she went out he hastily laid it down to follow her; but a carriage was waiting for her. The man-servant, hat in hand, opened the door, and the horses instantly snatched her from his sight.

"What is it, Don Raimundo?" said the bookseller, as he came into the shop again. "Are you struck by my fair customer?"

The young man smiled to conceal his agitation, and replied with feigned indifference:

"Who could fail to notice such a beautiful creature? Who is she?"

"Do not you know her? She is the wife of a banker named Osorio, and Salabert's daughter."

"Ah! Salabert's daughter! Then she lives in that palace in the Avenue de Luchana?"

"No, Señor. She lives in the Calle don Ramon de la Cruz."

He wanted no more. Away he went. This lady bore a singular likeness to his mother. The state of his mind, still grieving and sore, made the resemblance seem to him greater than it really was, and it impressed him vividly. A few minutes later he was walking up and down in front of the Osorios' house; but he did not succeed in catching another glimpse of the lady. The next day he went to walk in the Retiro, and there again he met her. Thenceforth he watched and followed her with a constancy which betrayed the strong hold she had on his feelings. Though he at no time forgot his mother's face, Clementina Salabert brought it yet more vividly before him, and this gave him a pathetic pain in which he revelled, paradoxical as it may seem. But any one who has lost a loved face from the world will understand it; there is a kind of luxury in uncovering the wound, and renewing the pain and regret. Raimundo could not gaze long at Clementina's features without feeling the tears on his cheeks; and this, perhaps, was why he so constantly sought her. In her face there was indeed a hardness and severity which his

mother's had never had; but when she smiled and all sternness vanished the resemblance was really amazing.

Our young man was well aware of the annoyance his pursuit caused her. At the same time he could not help laughing to himself at her misapprehension of the case. "If this lady could know," he would say to himself, as he saw her lips curl with scorn, "why she fascinates me so much, how great would her astonishment be!" A current of attraction, it might be said of adoration, drew him to her. But for her forbidding dignity, he might very possibly have addressed her, have explained to her the strange consolation he derived from her presence. But Clementina moved in so distant a sphere that he dreaded her contempt. It was enough that she should so evidently scorn him for his joy in beholding her. On the other hand, he had heard rumours greatly to her discredit; but he took no pains to confirm them—in the first place, because they did not concern him, and also because if they proved to be true he would be compelled to think ill of her, and he could not bear that a woman so like his mother should be, in fact, disreputable. He would know nothing, he would be content to indulge, as often as he could, that strange longing to revive his grief and move himself to tears. As he did not live in fashionable society and could not go to the theatre to procure this satisfaction, he had no choice but to haunt her in the streets or the parks when she was out driving. He also attended Mass on Sundays at the Jeronymite church, and there he could contemplate her at his ease and leisure.

He had told Aurelia of his discovery, but he had not pointed the lady out to her. He was afraid lest Aurelia should not see the likeness so clearly as he did, and should thus despoil him of his illusion. Clementina went out walking two or three times a week, in the afternoon, as she had done on the day when we made her acquaintance. Raimundo, from the window of his study in the Calle de Serrano spied her approach, as from an observatory, and when he discerned her from afar, down he went to follow her as far as he could. This persecution vexed the

lady all the more, as it was at this hour that she went to visit her lover. Not that it was a matter of any particular importance that this new connection should become known, but for a remnant of shame which survived in her. No woman, however unblushing, can bear to be seen entering her lover's dwelling.

Moreover, she knew, for she had heard it quite lately, that a husband who, finding out his wife's guilt, kills her on the spot, is held excused. Now, as she knew that Osorio hated her, she was afraid lest he might take advantage of this excuse to get rid of her. These vague terrors, added to that residue of decency, increased her rage against Raimundo. Her violent and imperious temper rose in arms at this unforeseen interference. She had not even paid any particular attention to the young man's appearance. She hated him without troubling herself to look at him. His indifference and submission to the utter contempt which she did not attempt to conceal, was also an offence. It was evident that this youngster was making game of her; if he were love-stricken he could not possibly show so much serene cynicism. No doubt he had discovered that he annoyed her, and meant to insult her out of revenge. And beyond a doubt he succeeded perfectly. The turns she was compelled to take in order to elude him, the visits she paid against her will, and all the terrors his pursuit cost her, rendered him more odious to her every day, and made her blood boil. She went out in the carriage, drove to the Calatravas church, and there dismissed it; but Raimundo, after being deprived for some days of the sight of her, committed the extravagance of taking a hackney coach to keep up with her.

This enraged her beyond measure, and she determined to put an end to the intolerable persecution, though she did not know how. At first she asked Pepe Castro to speak to the youth and threaten him; but on seeing how coolly he took the proposal, she indignantly determined never to return to the subject. Then she thought of addressing him

herself in the street, and desiring him, in a few words of freezing scorn, to annoy her no more. But when the opportunity offered she dared not—though timidity was not her besetting sin—the predicament seemed too delicate.

She was still in this state of doubt and hesitancy, when one day, as she went down the Calle de Serrano, happening to look up, she spied the enemy on the look out, high above her. This suggested to her the idea of asking his name and writing to him. And with the vehemence which prompted all her actions she immediately went in, and inquired of the porter:

"Would you be so good as to tell me who lives on the third floor here?"

"A lady and gentleman, both quite young; a brother and sister. They have been here only four months; they are orphans. Not long since, it would seem——"

The woman, seeing so elegant a lady, was ready to be communicative; but Clementina cut her short by asking:

"What is the gentleman's name?"

"Don Raimundo Alcázar."

"Many thanks." And she hurried away.

She went out into the street, but it struck her that writing to him would have its disadvantages, and that a verbal explanation would really be more satisfactory, since no one of her acquaintance could know anything about it. For a moment she paused in doubt; then she abruptly faced about and went in again. She passed the portress without saying a word, and lightly ran upstairs. On reaching the third floor, in spite of her determined spirit, her courage was somewhat dashed, and she was on the point of retreating. But her proud and haughty temper spurred her on, as she reflected that the young man must have seen her come in and would suspect her repentance.

There were two doors on the landing. One set of rooms, as Clementina had observed, was to let, so she decided on knocking at the door on the left, since there was a mat outside—plain proof that it was inhabited.

A maid answered the summons, and Clementina asked for Don Raimundo Alcázar.

"I wish to see him," she added, on learning that he was at home.

The girl showed her into the drawing-room, and as the visit struck her as strange, she asked whether she should announce it to the Señorita.

"No. Tell Don Raimundo I want to speak to him."

He, meanwhile, was sitting in his study, in a state of extreme agitation. On first seeing the lady enter the house, he had been startled without exactly knowing why. He recovered himself on seeing her depart, and was again excited when she came back. The idea that she might be coming up to his rooms flashed across his mind, but he immediately dismissed it as improbable. She must no doubt have come to call on one of the residents on the first or second floor, who were persons of fashion. Still, in spite of all reason, he could not be calm. When he heard the door-bell, he was aghast; he could hardly get so far as the ante-room, and before he could give the maid a sign, she had opened the door, compelling him to beat a hasty retreat. He was tempted to say he was not at home, even though the lady was in the sitting-room; but, after all, he made up his mind to go to her, reflecting that he had no rational motive for refusing.

Raimundo had seen very little of the world. His mother's friends had been few—relations and two or three families of acquaintance. He, on his part, had done nothing to extend the circle, and, as has been said, had formed no intimacies with any of his fellow-students, much less had he any familiarity with the public or private entertainments of the capital. His youth and early manhood had been happily spent at home, in studying and arranging his butterflies. He knew life only from books. At the same time Nature had bestowed on him a frank and simple temper, some ease of speech, and a certain dignity of manner, which amply made up for the polish and distinction produced by constant friction with the upper ranks of society.

He went into the drawing-room with perfect composure, nay, with a lurking sense of hostility roused by the lady's eccentric proceeding. He bowed low on entering. The situation was, in fact, so strange, that Clementina, in spite of her pride, her experience, and her indifference—it might almost be said her effrontery, was suddenly at a loss. It was only by an effort that she recovered her spirit.

"Here I am, you see," she said in a sharp tone, which was strangely inappropriate and discourteous.

"To what do I owe the honour of your visit?" replied Raimundo in a rather tremulous voice.

"Well—" she paused for a moment, "you owe it to the honour you do me of following me everywhere like my shadow, as you have been doing these past two months. Do you suppose that it can be agreeable to be haunted whenever I appear in the street? In short, you have made me quite nervous, and to avoid injury to my health I have taken the ridiculous step of coming up here to beg you to cease your pursuit. If you have anything interesting to say to me say it at once and have done."

She spoke the words impetuously, as feeling herself in a false position, and wishing to get out of it by an exaggerated display of annoyance.

Raimundo looked at her in amazement, and this vexed Clementina, and added to her vehemence.

"Señora, I am grieved to the soul to think that I should have offended you; nothing could be further from my intentions. If you could only know the feelings your face arouses in me!" he stammered out.

Clementina broke in:

"If you are about to make me a declaration of love, you may save yourself the trouble. I am married; and if I were not it would be just the same."

"No, Señora, I have no such confession to make," said the young entomologist with a smile. "I will explain the matter. I can quite understand your having misunderstood the senti-

ments which prompt me, and it is natural that you should feel offended. How far you must be from suspecting the truth! I have not fallen in love with you. If I had I should certainly not follow you like a sort of street pirate—above all, under the circumstances——"

Here Raimundo looked grave, and paused. Then he added precipitately, in a voice husky with emotion:

"My mother died not long since, and you are wonderfully like her."

He looked at her, as he spoke, with anxious attentiveness; there were tears in his eyes, and it was only by a great effort that he checked a sob.

The confession roused Clementina's surprise and doubts. She stood still gazing at him for her part with fixed inquiry. Raimundo understood what must be passing in her mind, and opening the door into his study, he said:

"See for yourself. See if what I say is not the truth."

The lady advanced a few steps, and saw on the wall facing her, above the writing-table, an enlarged photograph of an exceptionally lovely woman, who, no doubt, bore some resemblance to herself, though it was not so striking as the young man fancied. The frame was wreathed with immortelles."

"We are somewhat alike," said she, after studying the portrait attentively. "But this lady was far more beautiful than I."

"No, not more beautiful. Her eyes were softer, and that gave her face an indescribable charm. It was her pure and loving soul which shone through them."

He spoke with ardour, not heeding the want of gallantry the words implied. Clementina's pride suffered all the more from the simplicity and conviction of his tone; both contemplated the picture for a few seconds in silence. Tears trembled in Raimundo's eyes. At last the lady asked:

"How old was your mother?"

"Forty-one."

"And I am five-and-thirty," she replied, with ill-disguised satisfaction.

Raimundo looked at her once more.

"Yes, you are younger and handsomer. But my mother's complexion was finer, though she was some years older. Her skin was as soft as satin, and there was no worn look about her eyes; they were like a child's. It was very natural. My mother's life was calm and uneventful; she had done nothing to wear out her body or soul."

He was quite unconscious of implying anything rude to the lady whom he addressed. She was indeed exceedingly nettled, but she did not dare to show it, for the youth's grief and perfect sincerity inspired her with respect. She therefore changed the subject, glancing round the study with some curiosity.

"You collect butterflies it would seem."

"Yes, Señora, from my childhood, and I have succeeded in getting together a very respectable number of varieties. I have some very beautiful and curious species—look here."

Clementina went to one of the cabinets. Raimundo eagerly opened it and placed a tray in her hand full of lovely creatures of the most brilliant hues.

"They really are very pretty and strange. Of what use are they when you have got them? Do you sell them?"

"No, Señora," said he with a smile, "my object is purely scientific."

"Ah!" And she glanced at him with surprise. Clementina had very little sympathy with men of science, but they inspired her with a vague respect mingled with awe, as beings of another race in whom some people discerned superior merits.

"Then you are a naturalist?" she inquired.

"I am studying with that view. My father was a naturalist."

While he displayed his precious collection—not without the condescension with which the learned explain their labours

to the profane—he gave her some insight into his simple existence. As he spoke of his mother's illness emotion again got the better of him, and the tears rose to his eyes. Clementina listened with interest, looking meanwhile at the drawers he placed before her, and speaking a few words of admiration of the martyred insects, or of sympathy as Raimundo related his mother's death. She affected to be cool and at her ease, but she could not quite dissemble her embarrassment in the anomalous situation to which her strange action had given rise.

She released herself abruptly, as she did everything. She quite gravely held out her hand to the young man, saying:

"Many thanks for your kindness, Señor Alcázar. I am glad to find that I have not been the object of such a pursuit as I had supposed. At the same time, nevertheless, I beg you not to repeat it. I am married, you see; it might be thought that I encouraged it, or had given you some reason——"

"Be quite easy, Señora. From the moment when I know that it annoys you it shall cease. Forgive me on the score of the motive," and he pressed her hand with a natural and frank sympathy, which achieved the conquest of the lady. But she did not show it; on the contrary, she looked sternly grave and turned to go. Raimundo followed her, and as he passed her to open the door, he said with a smile of engaging candour:

"I am but a nobody, Señora, but if some day you should wish to make use of my insignificant services, you cannot imagine what pleasure it would be to me!"

"Thanks, thanks," said Clementina drily, without pausing.

As they reached the door opening on the stairs, just as he was about to open it, Raimundo caught sight of his sister's little head peeping inquisitively into the passage.

"Come here, Aurelia," said he.

But the girl paid no heed and hastily withdrew.

"Aurelia, Aurelia!"

Very much against her will she came out into the anteroom, and approached smiling and as red as a cherry.

"This is the lady of whom I spoke to you as being so like mamma."

Aurelia looked at her not knowing what to say, still smiling and blushing.

"Do you not think her very like?"

"I do not see it," replied his sister after a moment's hesitation.

"There, you see!" exclaimed Clementina, turning to him with a smile. "It was only a fancy, an hallucination on your part."

There was a touch of annoyance in her tone. Aurelia's advent made her position more false than ever.

"Never mind," said Raimundo, "I see the resemblance clearly, and that is enough."

The door was standing open.

"So pleased," said Clementina, addressing Aurelia without offering her hand, but with one of those frigid and condescending bows by which a woman of fashion at once establishes the distance which divides her from a new acquaintance.

Aurelia murmured a few polite words. Raimundo went out on the landing to take leave of her, repeating his polite and cordial speeches, which did not seem to impress the lady, to judge from her grave reserve. She went downstairs, dissatisfied with herself and full of obscure irritation. It was not the first time, nor the second, that her impetuous nature had placed her in such a ridiculous and anomalous position.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SAVAGE CLUB OF MADRID.

At two in the afternoon about a dozen of the most constant habitués of the Savage Club lay picturesquely scattered on the divans and easy chairs of their large drawing-room. In one corner was a group formed of General Patiño, Pepe Castro, Cobo Ramirez, Ramoncito Maldonado, and two other members with whom we have no concern. Apart from these sat Manolito Dávalos, alone; and beyond him Pinedo with a party of friends. The attitudes of these young men—for they were most of them young—corresponded perfectly with the refinement which shone in every revelation of the elegance of their minds. One had his head on the divan and his feet on an armchair; another, while he curled his moustache with his left hand, was stroking the calf of his leg below his trousers with his right; one leaned back with his arms folded, and one condescended to rest his exquisite boots on the red velvet seats of two chairs.

This *Club de los Selvajes* is a parody rather than a translation of the English Savage Club. To be accurate, it is a translation of such graceful freedom that it keeps up the true Spanish spirit in close alliance with the British. In honour of its name, all the outward aspect of the club is extremely English. The members always appear in full dress every evening in the winter, in smoking jackets in the summer; the servants wear knee-breeches and powder; there is a spacious and handsome dining-room, a fencing court, dressing-rooms, bath-rooms, and a few bed-rooms; the club has, too, its own

stables, with carriage and saddle horses for the use of the members.

The Spanish character is revealed in various details of internal management. The most remarkable feature is a general lack of ready money, which gives rise to singular situations among the members themselves, and in their relations to the outer world, producing a complicated and beautiful variety which could nowhere be met with in any other city in Christendom. It more especially leads to an immense and inconceivable development of that powerful engine by which the nineteenth century has achieved its grandest and most stupendous efforts—Credit. Within the walls of the Madrid Savage Club there is as much business done on credit as in the Bank of England. Not only do the members lend each other money and gamble on credit, but they effect the same transactions with the club itself viewed as a responsible entity, and even with the club-porter, both as a functionary and as a man.

Outside this narrow circle the *Savages*, carried away by their enthusiasm for credit, bring it into play in their relations with the tailor, the housekeeper, the coach-builder, the horse-dealer, and the jeweller, not to mention transactions on a large scale with their banker or landlord. Thanks to this inestimable element of economical science, coin of the realm has become almost unnecessary to the members of the club. Its function is beautifully fulfilled by an abstract and more spiritual medium—promises to pay, verbal or written. They live and spend as freely as their prototypes in London, without pounds sterling, shillings, dollars, and pesetas, or anything of the kind. The superior advantages of the Madrid Club in this respect are self-evident.

Nor are they less in the cool and frank impertinence with which the members treat each other. By degrees they have quite given up the polite and ceremonious courtesy which characterises the solemn British gentleman; their manners

have gained in local colour approaching more and more to those of the picturesque quarters of Madrid known as Lavapiés and Maravillas. Nature, race, and opportunity are elements it is impossible to resist, whether in politics or in social amusements.

The club always begins to warm up after midnight, the fever is at its height at about three in the morning, and then it begins to cool down again. By five or six every one has gone piously to bed. During the day the place is comparatively deserted. Two or three dozen of the members drop in in the afternoon, before taking a walk, to colour their pipes. Stupefied by sleepiness they speak but little. They need the excitement of night to display their native talents in all their brilliancy. These are concentrated for the time on the noble task of bringing a meerschaum to a fine coffee-colour. If, as some assert, objects of art were once objects of utility, so that the notion of art involves that of usefulness, it must be confessed that, in the matter of their pipes, the members of the Savage Club work like true artists. They have them sent from Paris and London; on them are engraved the initials of the owner with the count's or marquis's coronet, if the smoker has a right to it; they keep them in elegant cases, and when they take them out to smoke, it is with such care and so many precautions that the pipes become more troublesome than useful. A "Savage" has been known to make himself ill by smoking cigar after cigar solely for the pleasure of colouring his mouthpiece sooner than his fellows. No one cares about the flavour of the tobacco; the only important point is to draw the smoke in such a way as to colour the meerschaum equally all over. Now and again taking out a fine cambric handkerchief, the smoker will spend many minutes in rubbing the pipe with the most delicate care, while his spirit reposes in sweet abstraction from all earthly cares.

Grave, dignified, and harmonious in grace, the most select of the members of the club sucked and blew tobacco smoke

from two till four in the afternoon. There is something confidential and pensive in the task, as in every artistic effort, which induces them to cast their eyes down and fix their gaze so as to enjoy more entirely the pure vision of the Idea which lies occult in every amber and meerschaum cigar-holder. In this elevated frame of mind lounged our friend Pepe Castro, smoking a pipe in the shape of a horse's leg, when the voice of Rafael Alcantara roused him from his ecstasy by calling across the room:

"Then you have actually sold the mare, Pepe?"

"Some days ago."

"The English mare?"

"The English mare?" he echoed, looking up at his friend with reproachful surprise. "No, my good fellow, the cross-bred."

"Why, it is not more than two months since you bought her. I never dreamed of your wanting to get rid of her."

"You see I did," said the handsome dandy, affecting an air of mystery.

"Some hidden defect?"

"No defect can be hidden from me," replied Alcantara haughtily. And every one believed him, for in this branch of knowledge he had no rival in Madrid, unless it were the Duke de Saites, who had the reputation of knowing more about horses than any other man in Spain.

"Want of pace, then?"

"No, nor that either."

Rafael shrugged his shoulders, and turned to talk to his neighbours; he was a ruddy youth, with a dissipated face and small greenish eyes full of cruelty. Like some other who were to be seen at the club every day, he frequented the company of the aristocracy without having the smallest right. He was of humble birth, the son of an upholsterer in the Calle Mayor. He had at an early age spent the little fortune which had come to him from his father, and since then had

lived by gambling and borrowing. He owed money to every one in Madrid, and boasted of the fact.

The qualities for which he was still admitted to the best houses in the capital were his courage and his cynicism. Alcantara was really brave; he had fought three or four duels, and was always ready to fight again on the slightest pretext. He was, too, perfectly audacious; he always spoke in a tone of contempt, even to those who most deserved respect, and was disposed to make game of any one and every one. These characteristics had gained him great influence among his fellow "Savages;" he was treated an equal by all, and was indispensable to every ploy; but no one asked him for repayment of a loan.

"Well, General, did you like Tosti's singing last night?" asked Ramoncito of General Patiño.

"Only in her ballad," replied the General, after skilfully blowing a large cloud of smoke from a pipe made in the image of a cannon on its gun carriage.

"You do not mean that she was not good in the duet?"

"Certainly I mean it."

"Then, Señor, I simply do not understand you; to me she seemed sublime," replied the young man, with some irritation.

"Your opinion does you honour, Ramon. It is greatly to your credit," said Cobo Ramirez, who never missed an opportunity of vexing his friend and rival.

"So I should think; that is as true as that you are the only person here of any judgment. Look here, Cobo, the General may talk because he has reasons for what he says—do you see? But you had better hold your tongue, for you wear my ears out."

"But mercy, man! Why does Ramon lose his temper so whenever you speak to him?" asked the General laughing.

"I do not know," said Cobo, with a whiff at his cigar, while he puckered his face into a slightly sarcastic smile. "If I contradict him he is put out, and if I agree with him it is no better."

"Of course, of course! We all know that you are great at chaff. You need make no efforts to show off before these gentlemen. But in the present instance you have made a bad shot."

"I am of the General's opinion. The duet was very badly sung," said Cobo, with aggravating coolness.

"What does it matter what you say, one way or the other?" cried Maldonado, in a fury. "You do not know a note of music."

"What then! I have all the more right to talk of music because I do not strum on the piano as you do. At any rate, I am perfectly inoffensive."

This led to a long dispute, eager and incoherent on Ramon's part, cool and sarcastic on Cobo's; he delighted in putting his rival out of patience. This afforded much amusement to all present, and they sided with one or the other to prolong the entertainment.

"Do you know that Alvaro Luna has a fight on hand this evening?" said some one when they were beginning to tire of "Just tell me," and "Let me tell you," from Cobo and Ramon.

"So I heard," replied Pepe Castro, closing his eyes ecstatically as he sucked at his cigar. "In the Escalona's gardens, isn't it?"

"I think so."

"Swords?"

"Swords."

"Another honourable scar!" said Leon Guzman from where he was sitting.

"Rapiers."

"Oh! that is quite another thing."

And the whole party became interested in the duel.

"Alvaro has but little practice. The Colonel will have the best of it; he is the better man, and he fights with great energy."

"Too much," said Pepe Castro, taking out his handkerchief,

after throwing away his cigar-end, and wiping the mouthpiece with extreme care.

Every one looked at him, for he had the reputation of being a first-rate swordsman.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, I do. Energy is a good thing up to a certain point; beyond that it is dangerous, especially with rapiers. With the broadsword something may be done by a rapid succession of attacks; it may at any rate bother the adversary. But with pointed weapons you must keep a sharp look-out. Alvaro is not much given to sword-play, but he is very cool, very keen, and his lunge is perfection. The Colonel had better be careful."

"The quarrel is about Alvaro's cousin?"

"So it would seem."

"What the devil can she matter to him?"

"Pshaw! who knows!"

"As he is not in love with her I do not understand."

"Nothing is impossible."

"The girl is a perfect minx! This summer at Biarritz, she and that Fonseca boy behaved in such a way on the terrace of the Casino at night, that they would have been worth photographing by a flash light!"

"Why, Cobo, there, before he left, figured in some dissolving views in the garden."

"Alas! too true; that girl compromised me desperately," said Cobo in a tone of comical despair.

"Well, you had not much to lose. You lost your character by that affair with Teresa," said Alcantara.

"Beauty and misfortune always go hand in hand," Ramon added ironically.

"*Et tu*, Ramon!" exclaimed Cobo with affected surprise. "Why the time is surely coming when the birds will carry guns."

"Well, gentlemen, I confess my weakness," said Leon Guzman. "I cannot go near that girl without feeling ill."

"And the damsel cannot be near so sweet and fair a youth as you without feeling ill too," said Alcantara.

"Do you want to flatter me, Rafael?"

"Yes; into lending me the key of your rooms to-morrow, and not coming in all the afternoon. I want it."

"But there is a servant who devotes himself to water-colour painting every afternoon."

"I will give him two dollars to go and paint elsewhere."

"And a lady opposite who spends all her time in looking out of window to see what is done or left undone in my rooms."

"She will have a real treat! I will shut the venetians.—I say, Manolito, do you mean to pass the whole of your youth stretched on that divan without uttering a word?"

Davalos was in fact lying at full length in a gloomy and dejected manner without even lifting his head to notice his friend's sallies. But on hearing his name, he moved, surprised and annoyed.

"If you were in my place you would feel little inclined for jesting, Rafael," said he with a sigh.

It should be said that the young Marquis, who had never had a very brilliant intelligence, had now for some time been suffering from a distinct cloud on his brain. He was slightly cracked, as it is vulgarly termed. His friends were aware that this depression was all the result of his rupture with Amparo, the woman who had since thrown herself on the Duke's protection. She had, in a very short space, consumed his fortune, but he still was desperately in love with her. They treated him with a certain protecting kindness that was half satirical; but they abstained from banter about his lady-love, unless occasionally by some covert allusions, because whenever they touched on the subject, Manolo was liable to attacks of fury resembling madness. He was hardly more than thirty, but already bald, with a yellow skin, pale lips, and dulled eyes. His sister-in-law had taken charge of his four little children. He lived in an hotel on a pension allowed him by an old aunt whose heir he was supposed to be; on the strength of this prospect some money-lenders were willing to keep him going.

"If I were in your shoes, Manolito, do you know what I would do? I would marry that aunt."

The audience laughed, for Manolo's aunt was a woman of eighty.

"Well, well," said he, in a piteous voice, "you know very well that you have not had to spend the morning fighting with unconscionable usurers only to end by giving in—in the most shameful way," he added in an undertone.

"Don't talk to me! Don't you know, Manolo, that I have to get a new bell for my front door once a month, because my duns wear it out? But I take it philosophically."

He went up to Davalos, and laying a hand on his shoulder, he said in so low a voice that no one else could hear him:

"Seriously, Manolo, I mean it, I would marry my aunt. What would you lose by it? She is old—so much the better; she will die all the sooner. As soon as you are married, you will have the management of her fortune, and need not count up the years she still hopes to live. What you want, like me, is hard cash. Make no mistake about that. If we had it, we would get as fat as Cobo Ramirez. Besides, if you were rich, you could make Amparo send Salabert packing—don't you see?"

Davalos looked wide-eyed at his adviser, not sure whether he spoke in jest or in earnest. Seeing no symptom of mockery in Alcantara's face, he began to be sentimental; speaking of his former mistress with such enthusiasm and reverence as might have made any one laugh. The scheme did not seem to him preposterous; he began to discuss it seriously and consider it from all sides. Rafael listened with well-feigned interest, encouraging him to proceed by signs and nods. No one could have supposed that he was simply fooling him, while from time to time, taking advantage of a moment when Manolo gazed at the toes of his boots, seeking some word strong enough ...assion, Rafael was making grimaces at the ... with amusement and curiosity.

The door of the room presently opened and Alvaro Luna came in. His friends hailed him with affectionate pleasure.

"Bravo! Bravo! Here is the condemned criminal."

"How dismal he looks!"

"Like a man on the brink of the grave!"

The new-comer smiled faintly, and glanced round the room. Alvaro Luna, Conde de Soto, was a man of about thirty-eight or forty, slightly built, of medium height with hard, keen eyes and a bilious complexion."

"Have any of you seen Juanito Escalona?" he asked.

"Yes," said some one. "He was here half an hour ago. He told me that you expected him, and that he would return punctually at a quarter to four."

"Good, I will wait for him," was the answer, and Luna quietly came forward, and sat down among the party.

Then the chaff began again.

"Here, let me feel your pulse," said Rafael, taking him by the wrist, and pulling out his watch.

The Count smiled and surrendered his hand.

"Mercy, how frightful! a hundred and thirty. You might think he was condemned to death."

It was a pure invention. His pulse was quite normal, and Alcantara shook his head at his friends in denial. The jest did not vex him. Conscious of his own courage, and convinced that no one doubted it, he still smiled as calmly as before.

"Well, the funeral is at four to-morrow," said another. "I am sorry, because I had promised to go out hunting with Briones."

"And it is a long way to the cemetery at San Isidro," said a third.

"No, no, my dear fellow. We will take him to the Great Northern station, and carry him to Soto, the family Pantheon.

This joking was not in good taste; however, Alvaro made no demur, fearing perhaps that the least symptom of impatience might suggest a doubt of his perfect coolness. Encouraged by his phlegmatic smile, the "Savages" did not know when to leave off; the jest about the funeral was repeated with varia-

tions. In point of fact he was getting tired of it; but they could not move him from his cold and placid smile. He said very little, and when he spoke it was in a few supercilious words. At last, taking out his watch, he said: "It is three o'clock. Three-quarters of an hour yet. Who is for a game of cards?"

It was an excuse for releasing himself from these buzzing flies, and at the same time showed his perfect coolness. Three of the men went with him to the card-room. There the banter went on as it had done in the drawing-room.

"Look at him! How his hand shakes!"

"To think that within an hour he will have ceased to breathe!"

"I say, Alvaro, leave me Conchilla in your will."

"I see no objection," said Alvaro, arranging his hand.

"You hear, gentlemen, Conchilla is mine by the testator's will. What do you call such a will as tl.at, Leon?"

"Nuncupatory," said Leon, who had picked up a few law terms in the course of a lawsuit against some cousins.

"Conchilla is mine, by nuncupatory bequest. Thank you, Alvaro. I will see that she goes into mourning, and we will respect your memory so far as may be. Have you any instructions to leave me?"

"Yes, to give her a dusting every eight or ten days; if she does not get a good cry once a week she falls ill."

"Very good, it shall be done."

"With a stick. She is used to a stick, and will not take a slapping."

"Quite so."

The fun grew broader and louder. Alvaro's imperturbability had the happiest effect. He understood that beneath all this banter his friends cared for him and appreciated his bravery.

At this moment a servant came in who handed him a note on a silver waiter. He took it and opened it with some interest. As he read it he again smiled and handed it to the

man next him. It was from the manager of a Cemetery Company, offering his services and enclosing a prospectus and price list. Some of the youngsters had amused themselves by getting him to do it. But Luna did not take offence, and he seemed greatly interested in his game.

At last Juanito Escalona came to fetch him. After settling accounts he rose. They all gathered round him.

"Good luck to you, Alvaro!"

"I cannot bear to think of your being run through."

"Do not be absurd; there is no running through in the case. It will soon be over, with nothing but a scratch."

Jesting was now at an end, it was all good fellowship. Alvaro lighted a cigar with perfect coolness, and said quite easily: "*Au revoir*, gentlemen."

There was a large infusion of true courage in this demeanour; but there was also a touch of affectation, and deliberate effort. The younger members of the Savage Club, though not much addicted to literature, are nevertheless to a certain extent influenced by it. The class of work they chiefly study is the *feuilleton*, and the fashionable novel. These books set up an ideal of manhood, as the old tales of chivalry did before them. Only in the old romances the model hero was he who attempted achievements beyond his strength, out of noble ideas of justice and charity, while in the modern story it is he who for fear of ridicule abstains from all enthusiasm and generosity. The man who was always risking his life for the cause of humanity is superseded by the man who risks it for empty vanity or foolish pride. Swagger has taken the place of chivalry.

The party remained, talking of their friend's coolness. However, he was not for long the subject of their praise, for the first rule of "high tone" is never to show surprise, and the second is to discuss trifles at some length and serious matters very briefly. The company presently broke up, all the illustrious gentlemen going out to diffuse their doctrines throughout Madrid—doctrines which may be summed up as follows:

"Man is born to sign I.O.U.'s and cultivate a waxed moustache. Work, education, and steadiness are treason to the law of Nature, and should be proscribed from all well-organised society."

Maldonado, as usual, hung on to Pepe Castro's coat-tails. The reader is already aware of the deep admiration he felt for his model. And Pepe allowed himself to be admired with great condescension, initiating his disciple now and then into the higher arcana of his enlightenment on the subject of English horses and amber mouth-pieces. By degrees Ramon was acquiring clear notions, not alone of these matters, but also of the best manner of introducing French words into Spanish conversation. Pepe Castro was a perfect master of the art of forgetting at a proper moment some good Spanish word, and after a moment's hesitation bringing out the French with an air of perfect simplicity. Ramoncito did the same, but with less finish. He was also learning to distinguish Arcachon oysters from others not of Arcachon; Château Lafitte from Château Margaux; the chest-voice of a tenor from the head-voice; and Atkinson's tooth-paste from every imitation.

But, as yet, Ramon, like all neophytes, especially if they are prone to exaltation and enthusiasm, exaggerated on the example of the teacher. In shirt-collars, for instance. Because Pepe Castro wore them high and stiff, was that any reason why Ramoncito should go about God's world with his tongue hanging out, enduring all the preliminary tortures of strangulation? And if Pepe Castro, in consequence of a nervous affection he had suffered from all his life, constantly twitched his left eyelid—a very graceful trick no doubt—what right had Ramon to spend his time grimacing at people with his? Then, too, the young civilian scented not only his handkerchief and beard but all his clothes, so that from a distance of ten yards, it was almost enough to give you a sick headache. And there was certainly nothing in the doctrines of his venerated master to justify this detestable habit.

But the noblest and loftiest precepts of a great man too often degenerate, or are perverted, when put into practice by followers and imitators. Pepe Castro, though he was aware of his disciple's deficiencies and imperfections, did not cast them in his teeth. On the contrary, with the magnanimity of a great nature, he showed his clemency in pardoning and screening them. In his presence no one dared to make game of Ramoncito's collars or grimaces.

It was a little after four when the two "Savages" came out of the club, buttoning their gloves. At the door stood de Castro's cart, which he sent away after fixing an hour for his drive. He was first to pay a visit by Ramoncito's request They went down the Calle del Principe, where the club was situated, not hurrying themselves, and looking curiously at the women they met. They paused now and then to make some important remark on this one's elegance, or that one's style; not as bashful passers-by who gaze and sigh, but rather as Bashaws, who, in a slave market, discuss the points of those exposed for sale. On the men they bestowed no more than a contemptuous glance, or, as if that were not enough, they shrouded themselves, so to speak, in a dense puff of smoke, to show that they, Pepe and Ramon, belonged to a superior world, and that if they were walking down the street, it was only in obedience to a transient whim. Whenever Castro condescended to be seen on foot, his face wore an expression of surprise that his presence was not hailed by the populace with murmurs of admiration.

Maldonado was the more talkative of the two. He expressed his opinion of those who came and went, looking up at Castro with a smile, while his friend remained grave and solemn, replying only in monosyllables and vague grunts. Ramoncito, it may be noted, was as far below his companion physically as mentally. When they walked out together they really looked very like some learned professor shedding the dew of learning drop by drop, and an ardent disciple greedy of knowledge.

"By the way, where are we going?" asked Castro, vaguely, when they had gone down three or four streets.

"Why, were we not going to call on the Calderóns?" asked Ramon, timidly, and a little disconcerted.

"Ah! to be sure; I had forgotten."

Maldonado kept silence, wondering in his heart at the singular faculty of forgetfulness possessed by his friend. And they went along the Carrera de San Jeronimo to the Puerta del Sol.

"How are you getting on with Esperancita?" Castro condescended to inquire, blowing a cloud of smoke, and stopping to examine a shop-front.

Ramoncito suddenly turned very grave, almost pale, and began to stammer a reply.

"Just where I was. Sometimes up, sometimes down. One day she is very sweet—well, not sweet—no; but any rate she speaks to me. Another day she is as gloomy as the grave; hardly comes into the room before she is gone again; scarcely notices me—as if I had offended her. Once, I understood, she had some reason to be vexed, for at the opera I often go to the Gamboas' box, and I fancy she had taken it into her head that I was sweet on Rosaura. Can you imagine such folly? Rosaura! But I have not been near them for this month past, and she is just the same, dear boy, just the same. The other day I had her to myself in the little room for a few minutes, and in the greatest haste I just managed to tell her that I wanted to know where we were; for you see I cannot hang on for ever. Well, she listened to me patiently. I must tell you that I was altogether carried away, and hardly knew what I was saying. When I ended, she assured me she had nothing to be vexed about, and fled to the drawing-room After that, would you not suppose that it was a settled thing? Tell me, would not any man in my place suppose that he was on the footing of a regular engagement? Nothing of the kind; two days after, when I called, I tried to say a few words to her apart, as a lover may, and she snubbed me—she froze me. So

there I am. I do not know whether she loves me, or ever will, and I have not the peace of mind to go about my business, or do anything on earth but think of that confounded little slut."

"It seems to me," replied Castro, without diverting his attention from the window before which they stood, "that the girl has begun the attack."

Ramoncito looked up at him with surprise and respect.

"The attack?" said he.

"Yes, the attack. In every battle the important point is to be the first to attack. If at the moment when the adversary is about to advance, you attack him with decision, you are almost sure to succeed; if you hesitate, you are lost."

As he uttered the last words, he turned away from the shop-window and continued his majestic progress along the side-walk. Ramon did the same; he had very imperfectly understood the application to his case of this simile, derived from the art of fencing, but he abstained from asking any explanation.

"So that you think—— "

"I think that you are preposterously in love with the girl, and that she knows it."

"But then, Pepe, what reason can she have for refusing me?" Ramoncito began in a fume, as if he were talking to himself. "What does the girl expect? Her father is rich, but there are several children to divide the money. Mariana is still young, and besides, you know what Don Julian is. He would be torn in pieces sooner than part with a dollar. Honestly, waiting for his death does not seem to me a very hopeful business. I am not a nabob, but I have my own fortune; and it is my own, without waiting for anybody to die. I can give her as much comfort and luxury as she has at home—more!" he added, giving his head a determined shake. "Then I have a political career before me. I may be Under-Secretary or Minister some day when she least expects it. My family is better than hers; my grandfather was not a shop-keeper like Don Julian's father. Besides, she

is no goddess; she is not one of those girls you turn round to stare at, you know. Why should she give herself airs when I take a fancy to her? Do you know who is at the bottom of it all? Why, Cobo Ramirez, and such apes as he, who have turned her head for her. The little fool expects a prince of the blood to come courting her, perhaps!"

Ramoncito denied his lady's beauty, a sure sign of his being deeply and sincerely in love with her; his affection was not the offspring of vanity. His excess of devotion led him to run her down. Castro reflected that his companion's personal defects might have something to do with his ill-success in this and some other affairs; but he did not express the opinion. He thought it safer, as he closed his eyes and sucked his cigar, to pronounce this general truth:

"Girls are such idiots."

Ramoncito, agreeing in principle, nevertheless persisted in driving the application home.

"She is a little goose. She does not know herself what she wants. I say, Pepe, what would you do in my place?"

Castro walked on in silence for a little way, staring up at the balconies, wondering, no doubt, that all the world did not come out to see him pass. Then, after two or three deep puffs at his cigar, he put on a very grave and judicial air, and replied: "My dear fellow (pause), in your place, I should begin by not being in love. Love is *pour les bébés*, not for you and me."

"That is past praying for," said the young deputy, looking so miserable that it was quite sad to behold.

"Well, then, if you cannot get over the ridiculous weakness, at any rate do not let it be seen. Why do you try to convince Esperancita that you are dying for her? Do you think that will do any good? Convince her of the contrary, and you will see how much better the result will be."

"What would you have me do?" asked Ramon anxiously.

"Do not make such a show of your devotion, man; don't be so spoony. Do not go to the house so often and gaze at

her with eyes like a calf with its throat cut. Contradict her when she talks nonsense; hint that you have seen much nicer girls; give yourself a little consequence, and you will see how matters will look up."

"I cannot, Pepe, I cannot!" exclaimed Ramon, wiping his brow in excess of anguish. "At first I could master myself, talk without embarrassment, and flirt with other girls. Now, it is impossible. As soon as I am in her presence, I grow confused and bewildered, and do not know what I am saying, especially if I find her cross; every word she utters freezes me. You cannot imagine how haughty she can be when she chooses. If I try to talk to some one else, Esperanza has only to smile to bring me to her side at once. I did once pass nearly a month, almost without speaking to her; but at last it was too much for me. I would rather talk to her, even when she illtreats me, than to any one else in the world."

The two young men walked on in silence, as though under the burden of some great calamity. Pepe Castro was deep in thought.

"You are lost, Ramon," he said at last, throwing away the end of his cigar, and wiping the mouth-piece with his handkerchief, before putting it by. "You are utterly done for. What you say has no sense in it. If you had any notion of managing yourself, you would never have got into such a mess. Women must always be treated with the toe of your boot; then you get on all right."

Having given utterance to these few but profound words he again pulled up in front of a shop window.

"Look," said he, "what a pretty dog-collar, it would just do for Pert if I bought it."

Ramon looked at the collar without heeding, completely absorbed in his melancholy reflections.

"Yes, Ramoncito," the young man went on, laying his arm on his companion's shoulder, "you are altogether done for; still, I venture to say that Esperanza will love you yet, if you only do as I tell you. Just try my plan."

"I will try; I must come out of this fix one way or another," replied the youth pathetically.

"Well, then, for the present you must go to the Calderón's not more than once a week, or less. We will go together or meet there. You must not find yourself alone with her, or in some weak moment you will undo everything. You are not to talk much to Esperanza, but a great deal to the other girls who may be present. Then you should sing the praises of rosy cheeks, tall figures, fair skins—of everything, in short, that is least like her, and be sure you are sufficiently enthusiastic. Contradict her, and without seeming too much grieved. You are very obstinate, and it does not do to discuss matters too much, a tone of mild depreciation is far more effective. You had better glance at me from time to time; I can give you some covert signals, and so you will always be sure of your ground."

And thus, by the time they had reached the door of the Calderóns' house, Castro had expatiated on his masterly plan of campaign, with many valuable hints and details. Only a marvellously lucid intellect, joined to wide and rich experience, only the most subtle nature could have entered so completely into the secret struggle to which Esperanza's objection to Ramon had given rise in his soul. At the same time he was the only person who could solve the riddle. Maldonado reached the young lady's home in a state of comparative tranquillity. As to his inmost purpose, it may be said that he had fully determined to assume the utmost dignity he could put on, and to offer a bold resistance to Esperanza's advance and attack.

To begin with, he thought proper to put his hands in his pockets and pinch his lips into an ironical and patronising simper. He thus entered the little drawing-room where the banker's family were assembled, gently shaking his head as though he could not hold it up for the weight of many thoughts it contained. From the elegant to the coarse—as from the sublime to the ridiculous—there is but a step, and it would be bold to declare that Ramoncito, at the beginning of his

interview with Esperanza, always kept on the right side of the narrow rift. There is some reason for supposing that he did not. What is, at any rate, quite certain, is that the young lady did not immediately detect the change, and when she did, it did not make so deep an impression as he had hoped.

In the little sitting-room, when they were shown in, Mariana and Esperancita, with Doña Esperanza, the grandmother, were seated at their needlework; or, to be exact, Doña Esperanza and her grand-daughter were at work, Mariana was lounging in her chair, her eyes fixed on vacancy, and not moving a finger. Pepe Castro and Ramon, as being intimate with the family, were made welcome without ceremony. After shaking hands—excepting that Maldonado did not go through the ceremony with Esperancita—they sat down; Esperanza quite unable to imagine why Ramon intentionally neglected her, by way of a worthy beginning to the grand course of unpleasant discipline by which he hoped to school his beloved. Pepe took a chair next to Mariana, and Ramon next to Doña Esperanza. Before seating himself he had a momentary weakness. Seeing Esperancita sitting at some little distance from her mother, it seemed to him a favourable opportunity for a few private words, and as he moved his chair he hesitated; an expressive frown from Castro brought him to his senses.

"The sight of you is good for weary eyes, Pepe," said Esperancita, fixing her smiling glance on the illustrious dandy.

"They are beautiful eyes which see him now!" Ramon hastily put in.

Castro, instead of replying, looked sternly at his friend, and the deputy much abashed, went on to remedy his blunder.

"Fine eyes are the rule in this family."

"Thank you, Ramon. But you are beginning to be as false as all politicians," said Mariana.

"I do every one justice," replied he, blushing with delight at hearing himself spoken of as a public personage.

"Why, how long is it since I was here?" said Pepe to the girl.

"A fortnight, at least. It was on a Monday; Pacita was here. And this is Saturday; so you see—thirteen days."

No one recollected so precisely when Maldonado had called last. Castro accepted this proof of interest with entire indifference.

"I did not think it was so long. How the time flies!" said he profoundly.

"Evidently. It flies for you—away from us."

The young man smiled affably, and asked leave to light a cigar. Then he said:

"No. It flies fastest when I am with you."

"Faster than with Clementina?" asked the girl in an innocent tone, which betrayed no malice. But Castro looked at her gravely. His connection with Osorio's wife had hitherto remained more or less a secret; and that it should be known here, in her sister-in-law's house, disturbed him. Esperancita blushed scarlet under his inquiring gaze.

"Much the same," he said coolly. "We are very good friends."

"Are you going there to-day?" asked Mariana, not observing this by-play.

"Yes; Ramon and I are going—Saturday? Isn't it? And you?"

"I am not inclined to go out. I have been suffering a little these few days from sore throat."

"Do not say you are ill, mamma," said Esperancita, pettishly; "say you would rather go to bed early." Her mother looked at her with large, dull eyes.

"I have a relaxed throat, my dear."

"How opportune!" exclaimed the girl, ironically. "I have not heard a word about it till this moment."

"If you wish to go," said Mariana, understanding at last, "your father will take you."

"You know very well that if you do not go, papa will not care to go either."

Her voice betrayed her irritation. A gleam of satisfaction lighted up Ramon's face, and he shot a look of triumph at Pepe. It was when she heard that he, too, was going that she had begun to wish to join the party.

The conversation now drifted into common-place, dwelling chiefly on the most trivial subjects: the news of the day, or the singers at the opera. Tosti's beauty was again discussed. Ramoncito, in the joy of his triumph, dared to call it in question, and abused tall and, above all, red-haired women. He admired only brunettes, round faces, a medium stature, and black eyes—in short, Esperancita; there was no need to name her. His friend Pepe, alarmed by this outburst, which was directly opposed to all the plans of siege on which they had agreed, made a series of grimaces for his guidance, and presently brought him back into the right way; but he then went so far into the other extreme, and began to contradict himself in so disastrous a manner, that the ladies presently remarked it, and he got bewildered and tied himself into a knot, from which he could not have extricated himself but for a timelv rescue by his friend and chief.

To remedy the blunder to some extent he entered on a long account of the sitting of the day before, with so many details that Mariana began to yawn, like the simpleton she was, and Doña Esperanza devoted herself to her embroidery, and made no secret of thinking of something else. Esperancita at last made a sign to Castro to come and sit by her. He obeyed, taking a low seat at her side.

"Listen, Pepe," said she, in a low and tremulous voice. "Of late you have been very sullen with me. I do not know whether I can have said anything to vex you. If so, pray forgive me."

"I do not know what you mean. I could never be vexed by anything that such a sweet little person as you might say," replied the young man, with the lordly smile of a Sultan.

"I am glad it was a false alarm on my part. Many thanks for the compliment, if you mean it—which I doubt. It would grieve me to the heart to displease you in any way," and as she spoke she blushed up to her ears.

"But I hear you are very apt to be displeasing."

"Oh, no!"

"So my friend Ramon tells me."

Esperancita's countenance clouded, and a deep line marked her childlike brow.

"I do not know why he should say so."

"Your conscience does not prick you?"

"Not in the least."

"What a heart of stone!"

"Why? If I have hurt his feelings it is his own fault."

"So I told him. But I believe his complaint is in a fair way to be cured, and that he will not again expose himself to your thrusts. He has been more cheerful and less absent-minded these last few days."

Castro was quite honestly doing his best for his friend.

"I should be only too glad to hear it," said the girl, with perfect simplicity.

Castro sang the praises of his friend and earnestly recommended him to Esperancita's good graces. But as he poured exaggerated eulogies into the girl's ear, his tone of disdain and the satirical smile which accompanied them somewhat weakened their effect. And even if it had not been so, she would have received them with no less hostility.

"Come, Pepe, you want to make a fool of me?"

"Indeed, Esperancita, Ramon has a great future before him, and in time may very likely be made Minister."

The hero in question, meanwhile, was explaining, with his usual fluency, to Mariana and her mother, how he had discovered an extensive fraud in the custom-house returns on imported meat: three hundred and fifty hams had been brought into the country, a few days since, smuggled in with the cogni sance of some of the officials. Ramoncito meant to bring

these men to justice without delay. Mariana implored him not to be too severe with them; they were perhaps fathers of families, but she could not mollify him. His sense of municipal rights was more rigid perhaps than the muscles of his neck—to judge by the number of times he turned his head to look where Pepe and Esperancita were talking. He was not jealous; he had absolute confidence in his friend's loyalty; but he wanted his beloved to hear him when he brought out certain phrases: "To the bar of justice;" "I can no doubt obtain an adverse verdict;" "The municipal law requires that they should be prosecuted," and so forth, so that the angel of his heart might fully appreciate the high destiny in store for her if she were united to so energetic an administrator.

They now heard steps in the adjoining room, and a cough which they all knew only too well. Doña Esperanza when she heard it hastily handed her work to her daughter, or, to be exact, crammed it into Mariana's hands.

When Calderón came in, his wife was stitching with affected diligence, while her mother was sitting with her hands folded, as if she had not stirred from her attitude for a long time. Ramon and Castro had scarcely noticed the manœuvre. The reason of it was that Calderón could not forgive his wife her apathy and indolence, regarding these faults as positive calamities, and himself as most unfortunate for having married so inert a woman. Not that any work she might do mattered in the household; but his vehemently laborious temperament asserted itself against one so diametrically opposed to it. Mariana's limpness and indifference irritated his nerves and gave rise to sharp discussions and frequent squabbles. She feebly defended herself, declaring that her parents had not brought her up to be a maid-of-all-work, since they had enough to allow her to live like a lady. Whereupon Don Julian would turn furious, and declare that it was the duty of every one to work, or at any rate to do something; that total idleness was incomprehensible; that it was a wife's duty to see that the property of the household was not wasted, even if she could

not add to it, &c. &c. And, finally, that the mistress's incurable indolence was at the bottom of their domestic discomfort.

Doña Esperanza was very unlike her daughter; by nature she was active, vigilant, and at least as avaricious as her son-in-law; she could never sit a quarter of an hour without something to occupy her hands. In the affairs of the house, indeed, she played no important part, because Calderón took a pleasure in managing and ordering everything himself. And this indicated a contradictory characteristic which must here be mentioned for a full comprehension of his character. He complained that his wife did not undertake the care of the house, and that he consequently was compelled to manage it, but at the same time, though he knew that his mother-in-law was both capable and willing, he would not leave it to her. This gave rise to a suspicion that, even if Mariana had been a prodigy of energy and method, he would no more have entrusted her with the management of domestic affairs than with his business. His suspicious and sordid nature made him prefer toil to rest; he would have liked to possess a hundred eyes to watch over everything that belonged to him. Doña Esperanza also lamented her daughter's incapacity, and eagerly seconded her son-in-law's stinginess, helping him very materially in his close vigilance. But while she herself found fault with Mariana's apathy, she was her mother after all; she hated that Calderón should blame her, and acutely felt their matrimonial differences. Consequently, whenever she could avert one she did so, even at the cost of some sacrifice, concealing Mariana's faults and voluntarily taking them on herself. It was for this reason that she had so precipitately handed to her the cushion she was embroidering.

Don Julian came into the room reading the *feuilleton* of *La Correspondencia*, which he carefully preserved and stitched together. Don Julian, strange as it may seem, was very fond of novels; but he only read those which came out in the *Correspondencia*, or the religious tales he gave his daughter who was at school. He had never been known to go into a bookseller's of his own accord to buy one. And not only did he read them,

but he was very prone to weep over them. He was deeply sentimental at the bottom of his heart; it was a weakness of his constitution, like rheumatism or asthma. The misfortunes or poverty of others touched him greatly; if he could have remedied them by any means not involving any loss of money he would no doubt have done so at once. Generous deeds made him shed tears of enthusiasm; but he thought himself incapable of doing them—and he was right. And he made great efforts to do violence to his instincts; he was by no means the least ready to give of the rich men of Madrid. He set aside a fixed sum for the poor, and entered it in his accounts as though they were his creditors. But when once the monthly allowance was spent, he might, perhaps, have left a poor wretch to die of hunger in the street and not have given him a penny; not for want of feeling, but by reason of the strong hold figures had over his mind. The idea of depriving himself of a peseta for any other form of outlay than buying to sell was beyond his ken. Thus far his almsgiving had superior merits to that of other men.

As he now entered the little morning-room his face betrayed traces of emotion. After greeting his visitors, he said, as he seated himself in an arm-chair:

"I have just read an exquisite chapter in this novel—quite exquisite! I could not resist the temptation of bringing it in to read to these ladies."

He paused, not daring to propose it to Castro and Maldonado, though he would have liked to do so. He was very fond of reading aloud, because he did it fairly well, and Mariana took pleasure in hearing him; so far they were well matched.

"Read it, by all means, my dear; I do not think that Pepe and Ramon will object," said his wife.

Pepe bowed slightly; Ramoncito hastened to express enthusiastic pleasure: he was devoted to fine passages, &c. From the father of his inamorata he would have listened to the reading of a table of logarithms.

Don Julian wiped his spectacles, and, in a mild throat-voice which he kept for such occasions, began to read the episode describing the sufferings of a child lost in the streets of Paris. But his eyes instantly grew dim and his voice began to break, till at length he was so choked by emotion that he could scarcely be heard, and Ramon took the paper and read on to the end. Castro, looking on at this absurdity, hid a superior smile behind volumes of tobacco-smoke.

The chapter being ended, every one praised it in the most flattering terms. Mariana looked at her work, and observed that she would need a piece of silk for the lining, since the cushion was nearly finished. Doña Esperanza, to whom she made the remark, was of the same opinion.

"Ramoncito," said she, "be so good as to ring that bell."

The young civilian hastened to comply, and the lady's maid immediately appeared.

"I want you to go out and buy me a yard of silk," said her mistress.

The girl, having taken her instructions, was about to depart on the errand, when Don Julian, who was listening, stopped her.

"Wait a moment," said he; "I will see if I do not happen to have the thing you want." And he briskly left the room. In three minutes he returned with an old umbrella in his hand.

"Do not you think the silk of this umbrella might serve your purpose?" he said. "It seems to me to be just the colour."

Castro and Maldonado exchanged significant glances. Mariana blushed as she took the umbrella.

"It is, no doubt, the right colour," she said; "but it is full of holes; it will not do."

Esperancita pretended to be absorbed in her work, but her face was of the colour of a poppy. Doña Esperanza alone took up the question and discussed it seriously. Finally, the silk was rejected, to the chagrin of the banker, who muttered

various uncomplimentary remarks on the management and economy of women.

Ramon, by this time, could no longer endure the torments of Tantalus, to which his friend's plans had condemned him; he never ceased gazing across to the spot where Pepe and Esperancita were chatting. He began by rising from his chair under pretence of moving about a little, and walked to and fro. By degrees he approached the couple, and stood still in front of them.

"Well, Esperancita, is it long since you saw Pacita?"

How absurd an excuse for addressing her! He himself was conscious of it, and blushed as he spoke. Pepe flashed an indignant glance at him, but either he did not see it, or he pretended not to see it. The girl frowned, and replied, shortly, that she did not exactly recollect. This would have been enough for most people, but Ramon would not take an answer; on the contrary, he tried to prolong the conversation with vacuous or irrelevant remarks, and even tried to wedge a chair in between them and sit down; but Castro hindered him by covertly giving him a fiercely expressive stamp on the toes, which brought him to his senses. He continued his melancholy walk till, presently, he went back to his seat by the two elder ladies. He was soon engaged in an animated discussion with Calderón as to whether the paving of the streets should be done by contract or managed by a commission. He would have been only too glad to agree with his host; it was his interest to do so, since his happiness or misery lay in his hands, but the obstinate and fractious temper which Nature had bestowed on him led him to continue the argument, though he saw that Calderón was heated, and within an ace of being angry. Fortunately for him, before this point was reached, a servant entered the room.

"What is it, Remigio?" asked the banker.

"A man, Señor—a friend of Pardo's—Señor Mudela's coachman—has come to say that Señorito Leandro is not very well."

"Bless me! What has happened to the boy? He is not accustomed to such dissipation. He has spent all his life at school or tied to his mother's apron-string. He must be taken away from this life of excitement.—And what is the matter with him?"

Leandro was Don Julian's nephew, the son of a sister who lived in La Mancha. He had come to pay a visit to Madrid, and was leading a very jolly life in the society of other youths of his own age. He had begged his uncle to lend him his carriage for an excursion into the country. Don Julian, anxious not to offend his sister, to whom it was his interest to be civil, had granted the favour, though sorely against the grain.

"The sun and the dinner have upset him a little."

"Pooh! an attack of indigestion. He will get over that!"

"I think you ought to go to see him, Julian," said Mariana.

"If it were necessary, of course I should go; but, so far, I see no necessity. I say, Remigio, is he too ill to come here? Is he in bed?"

"Well, Señor," said the man, turning his cap in his hands, and looking down, as conscious that his news was serious, "the fact of the matter is this—one of the mares, Primitiva, is knocked up."

Calderón turned pale.

"And she could not come home?"

"No, Señor; she seems to be pretty bad, from what the Mudela's coachman says. Of course, those youngsters know nothing about it, and they let her drink her fill."

Don Julian started up in the greatest agitation, and, without saying another word, he left the room, followed by Remigio. The young men again exchanged meaning looks. Esperancita happened to see this, and turned scarlet.

"Papa takes such things so much to heart!" said she.

"How should he do otherwise, child?—a thoroughbred which cost him three thousand dollars! It is a shame in Leandrito!"

And for some minutes the old lady gave expression to her wrath, which was almost as great as her son-in-law's. Castro and Maldonado presently took leave. Mariana, who had taken the disaster with much philosophy, asked them to dinner.

"Stay and dine; it is too late now for a walk."

"I cannot," said Castro; "I dine at your brother's."

"Ah, to be sure; it is Saturday. I had forgotten. We will look in, if I am no worse, at ten, when the cards begin."

"Do you dine with Aunt Clementina every Saturday?" asked Esperancita in a low voice, but with a peculiar intonation. The young dandy looked at her for a moment.

"Most Saturdays, since I dine with your Uncle Tomas."

"Aunt Clementina is very pretty and very agreeable."

"She is considered so," replied Castro, a little uneasy.

"She has heaps of admirers. Are not you one of the most ardent of them?"

"Who told you so?"

"No one; I imagined it."

"You imagined rightly. Your aunt is, in my opinion, one of the loveliest and most elegant women of Madrid. Good-bye till this evening, Esperancita." And he held out his hand with a condescending air, which pained the poor child. She showed her annoyance by addressing Ramon, who was standing a little apart.

"And you, Ramon, why cannot you stay? Are you, too, going to dine at Aunt Clementina's?"

"I? Oh, no."

"Then stay with us—do. We will take care not to bore you."

"I—bored in your society!" exclaimed he, almost overcome with delight.

"Well, you will stay, then—won't you? Let Pepe go if he has other engagements."

Ramoncito was about to accept with the greatest rapture,

but Castro began to make negative signs at him over the girl's head, and with such vehemence that his hapless friend could only say, in a subdued voice:

"No, I cannot either."

"But why, Ramon, why?"

"Because I have some business to attend to."

"I am sorry."

The young man was so deeply touched that he could scarcely murmur his thanks, and he left the room almost at a snail's pace. As soon as he was in the street Pepe complimented him eagerly, and assured him that his firmness must lead to the best results. But he received these congratulations with marked coldness, and preserved a stubborn silence till he reached home, where his friend and guide left him, his head full of gloomy presentiments and the blackness of night.

CHAPTER VII.

DINNER AND CARDS AT THE OSORIOS'.

ON the day after her visit to Raimundo, Clementina felt even more ashamed and crestfallen at having paid it than at the moment when she came down those stairs. Proud natures feel as much remorse for an action which, in their opinion, has humiliated them, as the virtuous do when they have failed in humility. In her inmost soul she confessed that she had taken a false step. The youth's serenity and courtesy, while they raised him in her eyes, irritated her vanity. What comments must he and his sister have been making since her absurd and uninvited call! She coloured to think of them. Not to see or to be seen by Alcázar from his observatory, she ceased to go out on foot. The young man kept his word; she saw no sign of him.

But, why she knew not, his visage constantly rose before her eyes; he was perpetually in her thoughts. Was it aversion that she felt? Or resentment? Clementina could not honestly say that it was. There was nothing in his face or behaviour to make him odious to her. Was it, on the contrary, that his person had impressed her too favourably? Not at all. She met every day other men of more attractive manners and of more amusing conversation. So that it surprised as much as it provoked her to find herself thinking about him. She never ceased protesting to herself against this tendency, and reproaching herself for indulging it.

One afternoon, some days after the scene just narrated, she decided on taking a walk. Not to do so seemed to her

cowardly; she was doing this boy too much honour. As she passed the house where he lived she glanced up at his window and saw him sitting there, as usual, with a book in his hand. She immediately looked down, and crossed the road with stately gravity; but after going a few steps, she felt a vague sense of dissatisfaction with herself. In fact, not to bow to the young man, not even to return his bow, was unmannerly, after his frank explanation and the politeness with which he had shown her his fine collection of butterflies.

Next day she again went out on foot, and repaired her injustice of the day before by looking steadily up at the window. Raimundo made her so respectful a bow, with so candid a smile, that the beauty felt flattered, and could not deny that the young fellow had singularly soft eyes, which made him very attractive, and that his conversation, if not remarkably elegant, showed a solid understanding and cultivated mind. She ought to have seen all this at first, no doubt, but for some unknown reason she had not. From this day forward she went out walking as before. As she passed the house in the Calle de Serrano she never failed to send a friendly nod to the upper window, or he to reply with eager courtesy; and as the days went on these greetings became more and more expressive. Without exchanging a word they were on quite intimate terms.

Clementina made an attempt to analyse her feelings towards young Alcázar. She was not in the habit of introspection. She vaguely thought that it was an act of charity to show him some kindness. "Poor boy," she said to herself, "how fond he was of his mother! What happiness to have had so good and loving a son!"

One afternoon when these greetings had been going on for more than a month, Pepe Castro asked her:

"I say, is it long since that red-haired boy left off following you about?"

Clementina was conscious of an unwonted shock, and coloured a little without knowing why.

"Yes; I have not seen him for at least a month."

Why did she tell an untruth? Castro was so far from imagining that there could be any acquaintance between this unknown devotee and his mistress that he did not notice her blush, and changed the subject with complete indifference. But to the lady herself, this strange shock and rising flush were a vague revelation of what was taking place within her. The first definite result of this revelation was that on quitting her lover's house, instead of thinking of him, she reflected that Alcázar kept his promise not to follow her with singular fidelity; the second was, that as she stopped to look into a jeweller's window and saw a butterfly brooch of diamonds, she said to herself that some of those she had seen in her friend's collection were far more beautiful and brilliant. The third effect came over her suddenly: on going into a bookseller's to buy some French novels, it struck her, as she saw the rows of books, that Pepe had certainly not read and would probably never read, one of them. Hitherto she had admired his ignorance, now it seemed ridiculous.

Time went on and Señora de Osorio, tired of her fashionable existence, and having tasted every emotion which comes in the way of a beautiful and wealthy woman, began to find a quite peculiar pleasure in the innocent greetings she exchanged almost every day with the youth at the corner window. One afternoon, having dismissed her carriage to take a turn in the Retiro Gardens, she met Alcázar and his sister in one of the avenues.

She bowed expressively; Raimundo saluted her with his usual respectful eagerness; but Clementina observed that the girl bowed with marked coolness. This occupied her thoughts and made her cross for the rest of the day, since she was forced to confess more than ever that this was at the bottom of her *malaise* and melancholy. By degrees, and owing chiefly to her fractious and capricious nature, this love-affair, which might have died still-born, occupied her mind and became the germ of a wish. Now in this lady, a wish was always a

violent desire, above all if there were any obstacle in her way.

On a certain morning, after greeting Raimundo with the gesture peculiar to Spanish ladies, of opening and shutting her hand several times and going on her way, an involuntary impulse prompted her to look back once more at the corner window.

Raimundo was following her movements with a pair of opera glasses. She blushed scarlet and hurried on, ashamed at the discovery. What had made her guilty of such folly? What would the young naturalist think of her? At the very least he would fancy that she was in love with him. But in spite of the ferment in her brain, while she walked on as fast as she could to turn down the next street and escape from his gaze, she was less vexed with herself than she had been on other occasions. She was ashamed, no doubt, but when she presently slackened her pace, a pleasant emotion came over her, a light flutter at her heart such as she had not felt for a long time.

"I am going back to my girlhood," said she to herself, and she smiled. And it amused her to study her own feelings. She was happy in this return to the guileless agitations of her early youth.

She was so absorbed in her meditations, that on reaching the Fountain of Cybele, instead of going down the Calle de Alcalà, to go to Pepe Castro, with whom she had an appointment, she turned about, as though she had merely come for a walk. When she perceived it she stood still, hesitating; finally she confessed to herself that she had no great wish to keep the engagement.

"I will go to see mamma," thought she. "It is days since I spent an hour with her, poor thing."

And she went on towards the Avenue de Luchana. She was in the happiest mood. An organ was grinding out the drinking-song from *Lucrezia Borgia*, and she stopped to listen to it; she who was bored at the Opera by the most famous contralto!

But music is the language of heaven, and can only be understood when heaven has found a way into our heart.

Coming towards her, down the Avenue de Recoletos, was Pinedo, the remarkable personage who lived with one foot in the aristocratic world and the other in the half-official world to which he really belonged. By his side was a pretty young girl, no doubt his daughter, who was unknown to Clementina: for Pinedo kept her out of the society he frequented, and hid her as carefully as Triboulet hid his. The Señora de Osorio had always treated Pinedo with some haughtiness, which, as we know, was not unusual with her. But at this moment her happy frame of mind made her expansive, and as Pinedo was passing her with his usual ceremonious bow, the lady stopped him, and addressed him, smiling:

"You, my friend, are a practical man; you too, I see, take advantage of these morning hours to breathe the fresh air and take a bath of sunshine."

Pinedo, against both his nature and habit, was somewhat out of countenance, perhaps because he had no wish to introduce his daughter to this very smart lady. However, he replied at once, with a gallant bow:

"And to take my chance of such unpleasing meetings as this one."

Clementina smiled graciously.

"You ought not to pay compliments even indirectly, with such a pretty young lady by your side? Is she your daughter?"

"Yes, Señora—Señora de Osorio," he added, turning to the girl, who coloured with pleasure at hearing herself called pretty by this lady whom she knew well by sight and by name. She was herself pale and slender, with an olive complexion, small well-cut features, and soft merry eyes.

"I had heard that you had a very sweet daughter, but I see that reputation has not done her justice."

She blushed deeper than ever, and faintly murmured her thanks.

"Come, Clementina, do not go on or she will begin to believe you. This lady, Pilar," he continued to his daughter, "takes as much delight in telling pleasant fibs as others do in telling unpleasant truths."

"She is, I see, most amiable," said Pilar.

"Do not believe him. Any one can see how pretty you are."

"Oh, Señora——"

"And tell me, tyrant father, why do you not give her a little more amusement? Do you think that you have any right to be seen at every theatre, ball and evening party, while you keep this sweet child under lock and key? or do you fancy we care more about seeing you than her?"

Poor Pinedo felt a pang which he tried to hide; Clementina had laid a frivolous finger on the tenderest spot in his heart. His salary, as we know, allowed him to live but very modestly; if he went into a class of society which was somewhat above him, it was solely to secure his tenure of an office which was the sole means of sustenance for himself and his child. She knew nothing of this. Pinedo hoped to be able to marry her to some respectable and hardworking man; she was never to see the world in which she could not live, and which he himself despised with all his heart, although from sheer force of habit perhaps he could not have lived contentedly in any other.

"She is still very young; she has time before her," he said, with a forced smile.

"Pooh, nonsense! I tell you, you are very selfish. How long is it since you were at the Valpardos?" she went on to change the subject.

"I was there on Monday; the Condesa asked much after you, and lamented that you had quite deserted her."

"Poor Anita! It is very true."

Pinedo and Clementina then plunged into an animated and endless discussion of the Valpardos and their parties. Pilar listened at first with attention; but as the greater number of the persons named were not known to her, she presently

amused herself with looking about her, more especially at the few passers-by who were to be seen there at that early hour.

"Papa," said she taking, advantage of a pause, "here comes that young friend of yours who maintains his mother and sisters."

Clementina and Pinedo looked round both at once, and saw Rafael Alcantara approaching—the scapegrace youth whom we met in the Savage Club.

"Who maintains his mother and sisters?" echoed Clementina, much surprised.

"Yes, a very good young man, and a friend of papa's, called Rafael Alcantara."

The lady looked inquiringly at Pinedo, who gave her an expressive glance. Not knowing what it could mean, but supposing that her friend for some reason did not wish her to speak of Alcantara as he deserved, she held her tongue. The young man as he passed them greeted them half respectfully, half familiarly. Pinedo immediately held out his hand to take leave.

"This is Saturday you remember," said the lady. "Are you coming to dinner?"

"With much pleasure. My regards to Osorio."

"And bring this dear little girl with you."

"We will see, we will see," replied the official again, much embarrassed. "If I cannot manage it to-day, some other time."

"You must manage it, tyrant father. *Au revoir* then, my dear."

She took the girl by the chin, and kissed her on both cheeks, saying as she did so: "I have long wished to make your acquaintance. I sadly want some nice pretty girls in my drawing-room."

And as she walked on, in better spirits than ever, she said to herself: "What on earth can Pinedo be driving at by making a saint of that good-for-nothing Alcantara?"

With a light step, a colour in her cheeks, and her eyes sparkling as they had done in her girlhood, she soon reached

the gate of the large garden in which her father's house stood. The porter hastened to open it and rang the house-bell. She went in, and, contrary to her usual custom, she smiled at the two servants in livery, who awaited her at the top of the stairs. She went by them in silence, and straight on to her stepmother's rooms, like one who has long been familiar with the place.

The Duquesa at that moment was in council with the medical director of an asylum for aged women which she had founded some time since in concert with some other ladies. When the curtain was lifted and her stepdaughter appeared she smiled affectionately.

"It is you, Clementina! Come in, my child, come in."

Clementina's heart swelled as she saw her mother's pale, thin face. She hastened to her and kissed her effusively.

"Are you pretty well, mamma? How did you sleep?"

"Very well. But I look ill, don't I?"

"Oh, no," her daughter hastily assured her.

"Yes, yes. I saw it in the glass. But I feel well, only so miserably weak; and, as I have completely lost my appetite, I cannot get any stronger.—Then, as I understand, Yradier," she went on to the doctor, who was standing in front of her, "you undertake to look after the servants and the sick women, so that there may be no lack of due consideration for the poor old things?"

The doctor was a pleasant-looking young man with an intelligent countenance.

"Señora Duquesa," said he with decision, "I will do everything in my power to prevent the pensioners having any complaints to make; but at the same time, I must warn you that some may still reach your ears. You cannot imagine the vexatiousness and spite of which some women are capable. Without any cause whatever, simply to insult me and my colleagues, they are capable of heaping insolence on us. And the more attention we show them, the more airs they give themselves. I taste their broth and their chocolate every day,

and I have never found it bad, as that old woman declared it to be. The hours are fixed and I have never known the meals to be late. If you will make inquiries you will convince yourself that the persons who have ground for complaint are the poor servants, whom the old women treat shamefully."

The doctor had become quite excited and spoke these words in a tone of conviction.

The lady smiled gently.

"I believe you, I believe you, Yradier. Old women are very apt to be troublesome."

"Ah! Señora, that depends."

"We are, for the most part. But it is in itself an infirmity, and should excite compassion in those who suffer from it. I need not say so to you, for you have a charitable soul. But I beg of you to entreat those who are less forgiving, in my name, to be gentle and patient with the poor old women."

"I will, Señora, I will," replied Yradier, won by the lady's sweetness. "We shall see you on Thursday then?"

"I do not know whether my strength will allow of it."

"Oh, yes, I will answer for it." And feeling that he was not wanted, the young man then took his leave, pressing the lady's hand with affection and respect which spoke in his eyes, while he bowed ceremoniously to Clementina.

As soon as he was gone, she, who had been gazing with pain at her stepmother's worn features, and had been deeply moved by the goodness which was revealed in every word she uttered, rose from her seat and, kneeling down by Doña Carmen, took her thin white hands and kissed them in a transport of feeling. The beauty, who to all the rest of the world was so haughty, had a peculiar joy, not unlike the rapture of a mystic, in humbling herself before her stepmother. Doña Carmen's voice acted like a spell, stirring the dim sparks of virtue and tenderness which still lived in her heart, and fanning them for a moment to reviving heat. Then the elder lady gently removed her daughter's hat, and, laying it on a chair, bent down to kiss her fondly on the forehead.

"It is four days since you last came to see me, bad girl."

"Yesterday I could not, mamma. I spent the whole day over my accounts, doing sums. Oh, those hateful sums?"

"But why do you do them? Is not your husband there?"

"It is for fear of my husband that I do them. Do not you know that he has become as stingy and miserly as his brother-in-law?"

Doña Carmen knew that Osorio's affairs were not prospering, and that he had lately lost heavily on the Bourse; but she dared not tell his wife so.

"Poor, dear child! To have to think of such things when you were born to shine as a star in society."

"This alone was wanting to make him absolutely detestable. If one could but live one's life over again!"

The tender look had gone out of her eyes, they were gloomy and fierce; a deep frown puckered her statuesque brow, and in a husky tone she poured out all her grievances and related the daily vexations which her husband heaped upon her. To no one in the world but her stepmother would she have confided them; and she could speak of them without a tear, while Doña Carmen's weary eyes shed many as she listened.

"My darling child! And I would have given my life to see you happy! How blind we were, your father and I, to entrust you to such a man!"

"My father, indeed! A man who has never found out that he has a saint in his own house whom he ought to worship on his bended knees. When I think——"

"Hush, hush! He is your father," exclaimed Doña Carmen, laying a hand on her lips. "I am quite happy. If your father has his faults, I have mine; so I have no merit in forgiving him his if he on his part forgives me. Do not let us discuss your father. Talk about yourself. You cannot think how these money difficulties worry me; I am not accustomed to them. I would set them right on the spot if I could; but, as you know, very little money passes through my hands. I have to account to Antonio for all I draw, and he is

not easily hoodwinked. I might, to be sure, put aside a few gold pieces for you; but my savings would not help you far. However, I hope your difficulties will soon be over."

The good woman paused, gazing sadly into vacancy; then, kissing her daughter, who was still on her knees before her, she spoke into her ear in a low voice, and went on:

"Listen, child. I cannot live much longer, and I shall leave all I have to you. Half of your father's fortune is mine, as I understand from the family lawyer."

Clementina felt a thrill, a shock, which a psychologist would find it hard to define—a mixture of sorrow and surprise, with an undercurrent of satisfaction. However, sorrow predominated; she kissed her stepmother again and again.

"What are you saying? Die! No, you are not to die! I want you much, much more than your money. But for you I should have been a very wicked woman—and I shall be, I fear, the day you cease to live. The only moments when I feel any goodness in me are those I spend with you. I fancy, mamma, that you infect me with some of your exquisite virtue."

"There, there—flatter me no more," said Doña Carmen, again stopping her mouth. "You think yourself worse than you are. You have a good heart. What sometimes makes you seem bad is your pride. Is not that the truth?"

"Yes, mamma, quite true. You do not know what pride is, or the miseries it brings to those who feel it as I do. To be constantly thinking of things which hurt me—to see enemies on all sides—to feel a look as though it were the point of a dagger in my heart—to catch a word, and turn it over and over in my brain till it almost makes me sick—to live with my heart sore, my mind full of alarms—oh! how often have I envied those who are as good and as humble as you. How happy should I be if I had not a gloomy and suspicious temper and the pride which devours my soul! And who knows," she went on after a pause, "that I might not have been happier in some other sphere of life? If I had been poor, and had married some hard-working and intelligent young fellow, my lot might

have been better. Obliged to help my husband, to take care of a business, or attend to the details of the house, like other women who labour and struggle, I might, perhaps, not have come to this. I ought to have had a loving and patient husband—a man of talent, who could guide me. As it is, mamma, accustomed as I am to luxury and the fashionable world, I would gladly give it all up this very day and go to live in some pleasant spot in the country, far from Madrid. I only want a little love, and to keep you with me to teach me to feel and be good."

Clementina's present mood was idyllic; she had been pleasantly impressed by the simple home in the Calle de Serrano. In every woman, however hardened, however immersed in love adventures, there remains an eclogue in some corner of her brain which now and again comes to the surface. Good Doña Carmen listened to her and encouraged her by her smiles, and the younger lady's confidences lasted long. She recalled her early life, when she came to tell her stepmother of the declarations made to her at the ball of the night before, and to read her the *billets-doux* of her adorers. These reminiscences of the past made her happy. She was even tempted to talk about Pepe Castro and Raimundo, and confess the childish feelings which stirred her soul; but a feeling of respect withheld her. Doña Carmen's leniency was indeed so excessive as to verge on folly; it is very possible that, even if her stepdaughter had confessed her worst sins, she would hardly have been scandalised.

They breakfasted together, the Duke having gone to breakfast with a Minister. Afterwards, having relieved and refreshed their spirits with this long chat, they went together in the carriage to San Pascual's, where they prayed a while; and then they drove to the Avenue of the Retiro. They went home before dark, as the evening air was bad for Doña Carmen, and Clementina must be home in good time.

It was Saturday, the day on which the Osorios kept open house for dinner and cards. Before going up to dress, Clem-

entina looked round the dining-room, studied the arrangement of the table, and ordered some little alterations in the dishes of fruit which decked it. She sent for the packet of *menus*—written on parchment paper with the Duke's monogram stamped in gold—begged her husband's secretary to write the name of a guest on each, and herself laid them in order on the table napkins: herself and her husband opposite each other in the middle; to the right and left of Osorio, two ladies in the seats of honour; to her own right and left, two gentlemen; and then the rest of the party in order of dignity, age, or her own preference for her guests. Then she spoke a few words with the butler, and after giving him her instructions, she went away. At the door she turned to look once more at the table, and added:

"Remove those strong-smelling flowers from the Marquesa de Alcudia's place and give her camellias, or something else which has no scent."

The pious Marquesa could not endure strong perfumes, being liable to headache. Clementina, who hated her, showed more consideration for her than for any of her friends; her ancient title, severe judgment, and even her bigotry, made her respected, and her presence in a drawing-room lent it prestige.

Clementina went to her room, followed by Estefania, the coachman's sworn foe. She put on a magnificent dress of creamy-white, cut low. She usually wore a sort of *demi-toilette* for these Saturday receptions, with sleeves to the elbow. But this evening she was moved to display her much-praised person in honour of a foreign diplomate who was to dine in the house for the first time. While the maid was dressing her hair, her mind wandered vaguely over the events of the day. She had not kept her appointment with Pepe; he would certainly arrive in a rage. She pouted her under lip disdainfully, and her eyes had a spiteful glitter, as if to say: "And what do I care?" Then she remembered Raimundo's greeting and that ill-starred look backwards, with a feeling of shame to which her cheeks bore witness by a deepening colour. She called herself a fool—heedless, mad. Happily for her, the young man seemed

to be simple and unpretending; otherwise he would at once have built wild castles in the air. She thought of him a good deal, and with some tenderness. He was, in fact, attractive and good-looking and had a way of speaking, at once gentle and firm, which impressed her greatly; then his passionate devotion to his mother's memory, his retired life, his strange mania for butterflies, all helped to make him interesting.

How many times Clementina had thought over all this during the last few months it would be hard to say, but very often, beyond a doubt. Her spirit, lulled by a slumberous sweetness, was sentimentally inclined. That home on the third floor, that sunny study, that quiet and simple life. Who knows! Happiness may dwell where we least expect to find it. A heap of frippery, a handful of gems, a dish or two more on the table cannot give it. But an odious reflection, which for some little time had embittered all her dreams, flashed through her mind. She was growing old—yes, old. She allowed herself no illusions. Estefania found it more difficult every week to hide the silver threads among her golden hair. Though she firmly resisted every temptation to apply any chemical preparation to her beautiful tresses, she was beginning to think that there would be no help for it. The candid, eager, happy love, of which her adventure with young Alcázar had given her visions, was not for her. Nothing was left for her, nor had been for some time, but the vapid, vulgar inanities of aristocratic fops, all equally commonplace in their tastes, their speech, and their unfathomable vanity. What connection could there be between her and this boy but that of mother and son? She sometimes wondered whether Raimundo's feelings towards her were quite what he had described them in that first interview; but at this moment she was sure that he had spoken the simple truth, that love was impossible between a lad of twenty and a woman of seven-and-thirty—for she was seven-and-thirty though she was wont to take off two years—at any rate such love as she at this moment longed for.

These reflections furrowed her brow, and with an effort she

determined to think of something else. Looking at her maid in the glass, she noticed that the girl was deadly pale. She turned round to make sure, and said:

"Are you ill, child? You are very white."

"Yes, Señora," said the girl in some confusion.

"Do you feel the old sickness again?"

"I think so."

"Well, go and lie down, and send up Concha. It is very odd. I will send for the doctor to-morrow, to see if he can do anything for you."

"No, no, Señora," the girl hastened to exclaim. "It is nothing, it will go off."

A few minutes later the lady made her appearance in the drawing-room, brilliantly beautiful. Osorio was there already, walking up and down the room with his friend and almost daily visitor at dinner, Bonifacio. He was a man of about sixty, solemn and starch, with a bald head, a yellow face and black teeth. He had been Governor in various provinces, and now held the post of chief of a Department of State. He talked little, and never contradicted—the first and indispensable virtue of a man who would fain dine well and spend nothing, and his dress-coat was perennially adorned with the red cross of the order of Calatrava to which he belonged. In his own house, the most conspicuous object was a portrait of himself with a very tall plume in his cap and an amazingly long white cloak over his shoulders.

In one corner sat Pascuala, a widow with no perceptible income, whom Clementina regarded partly as a friend, and partly as a companion to be made use of, and with her, Pepa Frias, who had just arrived. As Clementina passed the two men to shake hands with Pepa, her eyes met her husband's in a flash like gloomy and ominous lightning. Osorio's face, always dark and bilious, was really impressive by its ferocity. It was only for an instant. The ladies exchanged a few words, and the men joined them, the banker beginning to jest with his wife about her dress in a tone of affectionate banter.

"That is the way my wife wastes my money. My dear, though you may not care to hear it, I may tell you that you grow stout at an alarming rate."

"Do not say so, Osorio, Clementina has the loveliest skin of any woman in Madrid," said Pascuala.

"I should think so. The enamelling she went through in Paris last spring cost me a pretty penny."

Clementina fell in with the jest, but she had great difficulty in acting her part. Through the convulsive smiles which now and then lighted up her face, and her brief enigmatical phrases, it was easy to see her uneasiness, and even a spice of hatred.

The door-bell rang frequently, and in a few minutes the drawing-room held fifteen or twenty guests. The Marquesa de Alcudia brought none of her daughters; they were rarely seen at the Osorios'. Then came the Marquesa de Ujo, a woman who had been pretty, but was now much faded; as languid as a South American, though she was a native of Pamplona, somewhat romantic, by way of being *incomprise*, with literary tastes. She had with her a daughter, taller than herself, and who must have been fifteen at least, though her mother made her wear petticoats above her ankles that she might not make her seem old. The poor girl endured the mortification with a fairly good grace, though she blushed when any one happened to look at her feet.

Next came General Patiño, Conde de Morillejo; he never missed a Saturday. Then the Baron and Baroness de Rag appeared; it was their first dinner there, and Clementina devoted herself to them, heaping them with attentions. The Baron was plenipotentiary of some great foreign Power. The Minister of Arts and Agriculture, Jimenez Arbos, Pinedo, Pepe Castro, and the Cotorrasos husband and wife—all came in together.



At the last moment, when it wanted but a few minutes of seven, Lola Madariaga and her husband arrived. This lady, though much younger than Clementina, was her most intimate

friend, and the confidant of all her secrets. She dined with her three or four times a week, and hardly a day passed without their driving out together. She could not be called pretty, but her face was so animated, her eyes sparkled so sweetly, and her lips parted in such a bewitching smile to show her little white teeth, that she had always many admirers. As a girl she had been an accomplished flirt, turning all the men's heads, loving to have them at her feet, prodigal of those insinuating smiles alike to the son of a duke or a humble employé, to the old man with a bald head and a bottle nose, or the slender youth of twenty, to the rich or the poor, the noble or the plebeian. Her coquetry equalised ranks and fortunes, uniting all men in a holy brotherhood to bask in the bright light of her fine black eyes, and adore the delicious dimples which a smile brought into her cheek, with all the other gifts and graces which a merciful Providence had bestowed on her. Since her marriage she still showed the same inexhaustible benevolence towards the human race, but in a less wholesale fashion—that is to say, towards one, or at most two, at a time. Her husband was a Mexican, very rich, with traces of Indian blood in his features.

They had been in the room only a minute or two when they were followed by Fuentes, a very lively little man, ugly and lean, and a good deal marked by the small-pox. No one knew what he lived on; he was supposed to have some small investments. He was to be seen in every drawing-room of any pretensions, and had a seat at the best tables. His titles to such preference lay in his being regarded as a brilliant and witty talker, intelligent and agreeable. For more than twenty years he had shone at the dinners and balls of Madrid, playing the part of first funny man. Some of his jests had become proverbial; they were repeated not only in drawing-rooms but in the cafés, and from thence were exported to the provinces. Unlike most men of his stamp, he was never ill-natured. His banter was not intended to wound, but only to amuse the company, and excite admiration for his easy, quick, and subtle

wit. The utmost license he allowed himself was to seize on the ridiculous side of some absent friend as the subject for an epigram, but never, or almost never, at the cost of his credit. These qualities made him the idol of his circle. No one thought a party complete unless Fuentes at least put in an appearance in the course of the evening.

"Ah, Fuentes! Here is Fuentes!" cried one and another, as he appeared, and a number of hands were extended to greet him. Shaking the first he happened to grasp, he turned to the mistress of the house, saying in a dry voice which in itself had a comic effect:

"Pardon me, Clementina, if I am a little late. On my way I was caught by Perales. You know Perales; I need say no more. Then, when I escaped from his clutches, at the corner by the War Office, I fell into those of Count de Sotolargo, and he, you know, is saddled with fifty per cent. handicap."

"Why?" asked Lola Madariaga.

"He stammers, Señora."

All laughed, some loudly, others more discreetly. That the sally was not impromptu was evident a mile off; but it produced the desired effect, partly because it really was droll, and partly because it was a point of honour with every one to laugh whenever Fuentes opened his lips.

A moment later a servant in livery opened the door, and announced that dinner was served.

Osorio hastened to offer his arm to the Baroness de Rag, and led the way to the dining-room. The Baron closed the procession, leading Clementina. The servants all stood in a row, armed with napkins and headed by the butler. Osorio marshalled each guest to his place, and they soon were all seated.

The table was elegantly and attractively laid. The light from two large hanging lamps shone on bright-hued flowers and fruit, on a snowy cloth, sparkling glass, and shining porcelain. This light, however, being somewhat crude, did not do justice to the ladies; it gave everything the sharpness of an

image in a camera. To moderate the glare and produce a more diffused light, Clementina had two large candelabra, with coloured shades, placed at each end of the table. All the ladies were in low dresses—some, like Pepa Frias, disgracefully *décolletées*. The gentlemen were in evening dress with white ties.

At first the conversation was only between neighbours. The Baroness de Rag, a Belgian, with brown hair and light blue eyes, and rather stout, was asking Osorio the Spanish names for the various objects on the table. She had not been long in Spain, and was most anxious to learn the language. Clementina and the Baron were talking French. Pepa Frias, who was between Pepe Castro and Jimenez Arbos, said to Castro, in an undertone:

"What do you think of Lola's husband? Really, not so bad for a Brazilian?"

Castro smiled with his characteristic superciliousness.

"He must have lassoed many cows in the Pampas?"

"Till a cow lassoed him."

"But that was not on the Pampas."

"I know—in a public garden. That is no news."

General Patiño, faithful to military tradition and his own instincts, was laying siege in due form to the Marquesa de Ujo, who sat by him.

"Pearls suit you to perfection, Señora. A smooth and slightly olive skin like yours, betraying the warm blood and fire of the South, is peculiarly set off by Oriental splendour."

"Flattering me as usual, General. I wear pearls because they are the best gems I happen to possess. If I had emeralds as fine as Clementina's, I would leave my pearls in the jewel case," replied the lady, showing a row of rather faulty teeth when she smiled, heightened with a few bright spots of dentist's gold.

"You would be in error. A pretty woman should always wear what becomes her most. The Almighty is surely best

pleased to view His finest works at their best. Emeralds suit fair complexions; but you are like the Xeres grape: amber-tinted, with a heady and intoxicating essence at the core."

"As it might be a raisin!"

"No, no, Marquesa; no."

The General eagerly repelled the charge and defended himself as valiantly as though in front of the enemy.

Meanwhile the servants were moving about handing various dishes, while others, bottle in hand, murmured in the ear of each guest, "Sauterne, Sherry, Margaux," in a hollow tone like that of a Carthusian monk muttering his *memento mori*.

"I drink nothing but iced champagne," Pepe Frias announced to the servant behind her.

"You need so much cooling" exclaimed Castro.

"You surely knew that," said the widow with a meaning look.

"To my sorrow!"

"Why, are you tired of Clementina?"

Fuentes was not happy under these conditions. It grieved him to lavish his wit in a *tête-à-tête*, so he seized the first opportunity of raising his voice and attracting the attention of the whole party.

"I saw you in the Carrera de San Jeromino yesterday morning, Fuentes," said the Condesa de Cotorraso, who sat three or four places lower down.

"That depends on what you call the morning, Condesa."

"It was about eleven, a little before or after."

"Then allow me to dispute your statement. I am never out of bed till two."

"Till two!" exclaimed one and another.

"That is going to an excess!" cried the Marquesa de Alcudia.

"But it is an aristocratic excess. Who gets up earliest in Madrid? The scavengers, porters, scullions. A little later you will see the shopmen taking down their shutters, the old women going to early Mass, grooms airing their masters' horses, and so forth. Next come the men of business and office clerks, who

do all the the real work of the Government, milliners' girls and the like. By about eleven you may meet a better class, officers in the army, students, civilians of a higher grade, and merchants. At noon you see the larger fry, heads of houses, bankers, and land-owners; but it is not till two that Ministers of State, Directors, Grandees of the realm and distinguished writers are to be seen in the streets."

The whole company were listening, greatly edified by this defence of laziness, and feeling themselves in a position to laugh at it, saying in an undertone:

"That Fuentes! Oh, that Fuentes can talk any one down!"

Then, simply for the pleasure of it, some one contradicted him.

'But then, my dear fellow, you do not know the delights of getting up early in the morning to breathe the fresh air and bathe in the sunshine!"

"I would sooner bathe in warm water with a little bottle of Kananga."

"Can you deny that the sun is glorious?"

"Glorious by all means, but just a little vulgar. I do not say that at the creation of the world it may not have been a very striking thing, worth getting up to look at; but you must admit that by this time it is a little played out. Can there be anything more ridiculous in these downright days than to call oneself Phœbus Apollo and drive a golden chariot? And, after all, the sun has no intrinsic merits; it stays blazing where God put it, while gas and the electric light represent the brain-work of men of genius. They are the triumph of intelligence, a record of the power of mind over matter, the sovereignty of intellect throughout the universe. Besides, you can always see the sun for nothing, and I have always had a horror of free exhibitions."

The company were all in fits of laughter, and Fuentes, encouraged by their mirth, outdid himself in paradoxes and ingenious quibbles, obviously forcing his own hand now and then. He fell into the mistake of certain over-praised actors:

he did not know where to stop, and at last became farcical. From the farcical to the gross is but a step, and Fuentes not infrequently crossed the line.

The Conde de Cotorraso persisted in his defence of the sun to encourage his friend's ingenious abuse. It was the sun which gave vitality to all nature, which warmed the earthly globe, and so forth.

"As to the sun giving life, I deny it," replied Fuentes. "Madrid is much more alive by night than by day, and, as to warming me, I much prefer coke, which does not give rise to fevers. Come, Count, be frank now. What particular merit can there be in a thing which, under all circumstances, your valet must see before you do?"

This was regarded as a final happy hit, and the subject was dropped.

From talking of the sun they came to talking of the shade, and of the shade of poisonous trees. The Marquesa de Ujo asked Lola's husband, the Mexican, whose name was Ballesteros, whether the manchineel were a native of his country. He replied that it was not, but that he had seen it growing in Brazil. The lady inquired very particularly into its properties, but she was greatly disenchanted on hearing that the shade of the tree was not pernicious, and that it was only the acrid juice of the fruit which was poisonous.

"So that you do not die if you fall asleep under it?"

"Señora, I did not fall asleep, don't you see? But I breakfasted under one with a party of friends, and we were none the worse."

"Well, then, how does Selika commit suicide in the *Africaine* by lying down in the shade of a manchineel?"

"It is a fable, an invention of the poet's. It is a pretty idea but not true."

The Marquesa, quite disappointed by this realistic view of the matter, refused altogether to accept it, and argued that possibly the manchineels of India were not the same as the American kind.

"Is it true, Ballesteros," asked Clementina, "that you have eight hundred thousand cows?"

"Oh, Señora, that is an exaggeration! My herds number three hundred thousand at most."

"If they were mine," said Fuentes, "I would build a tank as large as the Retiro Gardens, and fill it with milk and sail a boat on it."

"We make no use of the milk, Señor, nor of the butter. We sometimes dry the meat for exportation, don't you see? But generally we only save the skin. And the horns also are sold for various forms of manufacture."

"Plague take him for a bore!" said Pepe Castro in a low voice, but loud enough for Jimenez Arbos to hear where he sat by Pepa Frias, who was taken with a fit of laughter which she had the greatest difficulty in choking down.

She addressed herself to Clementina to conceal her mirth as far as possible:

"Pass me the mustard, there's a trump," said she.

"Trump, trump? What is a trump?" asked the Baroness de Rag, in her eagerness to learn the language, and Osorio explained the use of the word.

Pepa addressed herself from time to time to Jimenez Arbos; a few brief sentences in a low tone, which showed that they were on intimate terms, and at the same time revealed a desire to be prudent. Her conversation with Castro on her left was more animated.

"Why don't you advise Arbos to eat more meat?" he asked her.

"Why should I?"

"Because he ought to eat meat to give him strength to endure the fatigues of daily life."

"To be sure," said the widow, sarcastically. "But do you take care of yourself and leave others to settle their own affairs as Providence may guide them."

"Well, you see I manage to get fed."

"Yes, but do not let it go to your brain, or one fine day,

when you least expect it, you may find yourself without a dinner."

"Have I offended you?" said the young man, laughing as if he had heard something very amusing.

"No, my dear fellow, no. I mean what I say. For my part I cannot think how Clementina can bear such a Narcissus as you."

"Hush! hush! Be careful, Pepa, pray be careful!" cried Castro, with an alarmed glance at the mistress of the house.

"Do you know she is wonderfully artful. She has not looked at you once."

Castro, who had been a good deal piqued these few days past by his lady's coldness, smiled a forced smile and then knit his brows. Pepa did not fail to observe this.

"Look at the black cloud on Osorio's face; it is enough to frighten one! And you are the guilty cause of it, you wretch!"

"I! Oh, dear no! It is more likely to be some question of ready money which makes him look so bilious. I hear he is ruined, or within an ace of it."

Pepa started visibly.

"Who says so? Where did you hear that?"

"Several persons have told me so."

The widow turned sharply to Arbos on her other hand, and asked him in a whisper:

"Have you heard anything about Osorio's being ruined?"

"Yes, I have heard it said that Osorio has for some time been buying for a fall, and the market has gone up steadily," replied the official, with a toss of his head suggesting a peacock, and there was a touch of evident satisfaction in his tone. To a politician, buying for a fall is a crime worthy of any punishment. "I do not know how much he may be let in for at the next account; but if it is anything considerable, he is a ruined man. Consols have gone up one per cent., by the end of the month they may have risen to two."

Pepa's good spirits had entirely disappeared. She sat

looking at her plate and listlessly using her fork to finish the slice of York ham she had taken. The Minister, observing her gloomy silence, asked her:

"Have you by any chance any money in his hands?"

"By chance! No, by my own idiocy. Almost everytning I possess is in his hands."

"The devil it is!"

"Everything I have eaten has turned on my stomach; I believe I am going to be ill," said the lady, who was as pale as a sheet.

Arbos did his best to tranquillise her; perhaps it was not true: sudden losses, like sudden fortunes, are always greatly exaggerated. Besides, if any deposit were sacred to Osorio, it would surely be that of a lady who had entrusted her money to him out of pure friendship.

Though they were talking almost in a whisper, their grave looks and earnest manner attracted the notice of General Patiño, who, turning to the Marquesa de Ujo, said with singular perspicacity:

"Just look at Pepa and Arbos, a summer cloud has fallen on them. Love is a beautiful thing even in its transient torments!"

Clementina meanwhile, with Lola and the Condera de Cotorraso, had been discussing the effects of arsenic as a drug for beautifying the complexion and skin. It was the first time Lola had heard of it, and she was quite delighted, declaring that she would forthwith try this miraculous elixir.

"Good heavens, Lolita!" exclaimed Fuentes, "if, as you are, you cause such havoc in masculine hearts, what will happen after you have followed a regimen of arsenic for a few months? Señor Ballesteros, do not permit her to take it; it is too cruel to the rest of us."

"Come, come, friend Fuentes," said the pretty brunette, casting an insinuating glance at Castro, for she had taken it into her head that she would snatch him from Clementina, "are you trying to chaff me?"

"Chaff, what is chaff?" the Baroness de Rag asked again.

Bonifacio had for some moments been staring, without winking even, at the Belgian lady. A few days since he had purchased a photograph of a figure lounging in a hammock. He fancied that the Baroness strongly resembled this picture, and was anxious to convince himself by a prolonged study of what he could see whether what he could not see was equally like it.

The dinner could not end of course without a long discussion of the opera, Gayarre and Tosti. Otherwise the meal could not have been digested. The coffee was served in the dining-room, as was the custom of the house. Then the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room, followed by several of the men; others remained to smoke, but it was not long before they joined the others. The dining-room was intolerably hot.

Pepe Castro took advantage of the little stir as they left the dining-room to ask Clementina:

"Why did you not come this morning?"

Clementina paused a second, and looked at him with a condescending smile. "This morning?" she said. "I don't know."

"You don't know?" said the lordly youth with a sovereign frown.

"I don't know, I don't know," and she turned away still smiling a little disdainfully.

"You will come to-morrow?"

"We will see," she replied, walking away.

Castro felt that smile like a stab in his breast. He bit his under-lip, muttering: "Coquetting, eh? You shall pay me for this, my beauty!"

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER DINNER.

THERE were already some fresh arrivals in the drawing-room, among them Ramon Maldonado, and Pepa's daughter with her husband. In the adjoining room, six tables were laid out for cards, and some of the company sat down immediately to play *tresillo*. Others waited for their usual party to appear. It was not long before the rooms were crowded. Don Julian arrived with Mariana and Esperancita, Cobo Ramirez with Leon Guzman and three or four others of the same kidney, General Pallarés, the Marquis de Veneros, and several others, most of the men being merchants and bankers.

One of the last to arrive was the Duke de Requena, who was welcomed with the same eager and flattering deference here as elsewhere. He came in snuffling, smoking, spitting, insolently sure of the respect always paid to his immense fortune. He spoke little and laughed less, expressed his opinions with gross rudeness, and sat to be adored by the crowd of ladies who gathered round him. His cheeks were more flabby, his eyes more bloodshot, his lips blacker than ever. His whole appearance was so hideous that Fuentes, pointing him out, remarked to Pinedo and Jimenez Arbos: "There you see the Devil holding court among his witches at a Sabbath."

He was invited to join a party at *tresillo*, as usual, but declined. He had caught sight of two bankers, whom he was eager to secure for the affair of the Riosa Mines, and he also wanted to pay court for a few minutes to Arbos. He had

already contrived to get the mine put up to sale by auction with all its lands and plant. A company had been formed to buy it, but there was a difference of opinion among the directors; some wanted to pay for it money down, and among these was Salabert, while others wished to take advantage of the ten instalments allowed by the Government. The difference in interest was of course enormous.

The Duke made his way to speak to a Mr. Biggs, the representative of an English house, which was largely interested in the company, and the head of the party who were for payment by instalments. He put his arm over his shoulder, and led him into the recess of a window, saying roughly:

"Then you are bent on ruining us!"

And he proceeded to discuss the matter with a bluntness which disconcerted the Englishman. He replied to the Duke's brutal attack with mild and courteous argument, and a fixed benevolent smile. The Duke only spoke with added rudeness, which was in point of fact, very diplomatic.

"I have no fancy for throwing away my money. It has cost me a great deal of trouble to get it at all, you see; and in the long run I may very likely be obliged to escape with my skin by getting out of the business."

"Señor Duque, it is no fault of mine," said Biggs, with a strong English accent, "I must obey orders."

"These orders are instigated by an old fox in Madrid that I know of."

"Oh, Señor Duque! there is no old fox in the case," said Biggs, laughing.

And the banker could not get anything out of the Englishman, though he left him much to think of.

Pepa Frias, in great agitation, after ascertaining from various authorities that Osorio's affairs were looking badly, was talking matters over with Jimenez Arbos. Every one was of opinion that Osorio could meet his engagements; he had a large capital, and though he had lost heavily at the last few settlements, it was not supposed that he could be seriously hit. It

must, however, be added, that none of these gentlemen gambled, as Osorio did, for differences in the market. With him it had become a vice, and, in spite of the warnings of his friends and colleagues, he could not control the passion which sooner or later must inevitably bring him to ruin.

Pepa was watching him closely, and with a woman's keen insight she divined a troubled sea under his cold, quiet demeanour. Arbos was soothing her in stilted and well turned phrases—for not even to his mistress could he throw off the orator—while the widow herself was meditating some means of salvation. Her plan was to give the alarm to Clementina, and extract her promise to snatch Pepa's fortune from the burning, if burning there must be, by pledging her own settlements. Trusting much to her own diplomacy, and to her friend's reckless habits, she grew somewhat calmer, and Arbos took advantage of her restored serenity to exert the exceptional gifts of persuasion which Providence had bestowed on him.

Pepa recovered so far, in fact, as to sit down to cards with Clementina, Pinedo, and Arbos. As she crossed the drawing-room, she saw in a corner her daughter and son-in-law, sitting like two devoted turtle-doves. She stopped to speak to them, and as her temper was not entirely pacified, her tone was sharp.

"Yesterday you were ready to call each other out, and to-day nothing will part you! Come, children, do not sit together all the evening. You should not be so spooney in company."

Emilio was offended by her authoritative tone, the colour mounted to his face, and he was on the point of answering his mother-in-law in the same key, but she was gone into the card-room. So there he was left muttering an oath, and saying that he had never been in the habit of taking a scolding from any one, and he was not going to begin with his mother-in-law, with other equally vehement and incoherent declarations, which made Irenita look very doleful, and would have ended in tears if he had not discovered it in time, and, giving her a loving little nip inside her arm, asked her at the same time to let him

have half of the mint-drop she was sucking in her pretty mouth. And hereupon they fell to cooing again, as if they had been in the virgin forest instead of Osorio's drawing-room.

A party of five or six young girls, and among them Esperancita, were talking with a group of the younger men. Two of these were Cobo Ramirez and our intelligent friend Ramon Maldonado. It would be difficult to reduce to writing the ideas exchanged by these youthful talkers. They must have been subtle, amusing, and pointed, if we may judge by the mirth they gave rise to. At the same time the keen observer would have detected the fact that the young ladies' gestures, appealing eyes, saucy glances, and insinuating graces, even their shouts of laughter, had no direct connection with what was said.

For instance, a bland youth remarked:

"I saw you, yesterday, Manolita, at San José's, confessing to Father Ortega."

The damsel addressed laughed heartily.

"No, Paco, I am sure you did not see me."

"Pilar," said another, "Where do you buy such pretty fans?"

Pilar went into fits of laughter.

"What a joke! And you—where did you buy such a hideous dog as you take trotting at your heels?"

"Hideous, yes. But a darling, you must own."

Such speeches as these excited the most noisy merriment among the young people. They talked loud, giggled and gesticulated. The girls especially seemed to have swallowed quicksilver. Those who had good teeth showed them incessantly; those who had not laughed behind their fans. But the person who made most noise, and gave rise to most amusement was, beyond a doubt, Leon Guzman. Manolita, a vixenish little thing, with black eyes, and a wide mouth full of beautiful teeth, asked him what o'clock it was. He, drawing out his watch, replied that it was a quarter past ten. Then the Count produced his watch, and it appeared that it was already nearly twelve. This subterfuge amused the girls

immensely. Manolita, especially, laughed till she was quite limp; the more she tried to suppress her laughter the more convulsive she became. It was very evident that there was in the speech, and beneath the common-place and even stupid aspect of these gentlemen, a well-spring of humour, as fresh as it was deep, such as only young people of from fifteen to twenty can assimilate and enjoy.

When this mirth had somewhat subsided Leon Guzman contrived with some skill to move a little apart, and enter into conversation with Esperancita. This deeply pained and vexed Ramon. For the last ten days he had observed that the Conde de Agreda had cast admiring eyes in the direction of the lady of his adoration. He regarded him as a more dangerous rival than Cobo, being a man of much better position. Cobo, indeed, as he could see, was making no way, and this had comforted him; but now the aspect of affairs had changed. He could take no part in the merriment of the group, but sat making calf's eyes at the damsel in the most lamentable fashion. Esperancita, to his great consolation, was by no means especially amiable to the Count; she seemed bored, indeed, and depressed, looking very frequently towards the spot where Ramon himself was sitting. Behind him, to be sure, were Pepe Castro and Lola, talking with the greatest animation; but of this the young civilian was not aware.

When Leon moved, Ramon led him aside, and in a low tone made his plaint. Leon was to know that he, Ramon Maldonado, was also paying attentions to Esperancita, and was, in fact, hopelessly in love with her. It was a blow he could not bear, that so intimate a friend should come in his way. He pathetically reminded him of their childhood; their sports together, their school-life; and ended by beseeching him, in a voice broken by emotion, that unless he were really attached to Esperanza, he would cease to make him jealous. To all this Leon listened, half ashamed, and half impatient; to be rid of Ramon he promised all he asked; and presently among his intimates he had a good laugh at the cost of the low-born deputy.

Requena, after explaining his schemes to Biggs, sat down to play cards with the Condesa Cotorraso, the Mexican, and General Pallarés. But in a few minutes he was snorting with rage over his bad hands. In spite of his wealth he always played as eagerly as though it were of the greatest importance to him, whether he lost or gained a few dollars. If luck was against him, he got into a positively infernal temper, grumbling at his antagonists, and almost insulting them. His daughter was not unfrequently obliged to interfere and take his cards to play them in his place. Just now, Clementina was playing at the next table, apparently to her own satisfaction, and laughing at Pepa Frias for being silent and absent-minded.

"By the way, Pinedo, I had forgotten," said she, as she sorted the fan of cards she held. "Why on earth did you try this morning to make your little daughter believe that Alcantara, of all men, was a saint of virtue?"

"That is my secret," replied Pinedo.

"Tell it, tell it!" cried Clementina and Pepa, both in the same breath.

He let them beg and pray a little; then, after bidding them promise solemnly that they would never reveal it, he told them that, having observed a marked tendency in girls to fall in love with idlers and evil-minded youths, and to reject those who were steady and hard-working, he reversed the facts when talking of a scapegrace, in order that his daughter might not fall into the hands of one of them. When a well-conducted, hard-working young fellow went past, he always spoke of him as a simpleton or a rogue; if, on the contrary, they met a man like Alcantara, who deserved the worst character, he spoke of him in the highest terms.

Pepa, Clementina, and Arbos had paused in their game to smile at this strange explanation.

"And has this plan had the desired effect?" asked the Minister.

"Admirably, up to the present time. It never occurs to my daughter even to speak of those whom I have praised for

their virtues. On the other hand, she will sometimes say, with a smile: 'Do you know, papa, I met that profligate young friend of yours. He is really very pleasant and nice looking, as you must allow, and seems to be intelligent. What a pity that he should not sober down.'"

At this instant, Cobo Ramirez, who was wandering about, snorting like a tired ox, came up to the table and asked what they were laughing at. No one could be induced to tell. Pinedo signed to them to be silent, for he was greatly afraid of Cobo's tongue. Pepe Castro, too, tired of trying to rouse Clementina's jealousy by his behaviour to Lola without any visible result, softly approached her table with an air of deep melancholy. He posted himself behind Pepa Frias, resting his arms on the back of her chair. Fuentes came up to say Good night.

"Will you not take some chocolate?" asked Clementina, holding out her hand.

"How can you expect a man to drink chocolate when he has just had a sonnet fired off in his face?"

"Mariscal?"

"The very man. In the dining-room—he lay in ambush."

Mariscal was a young poet in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who wrote sonnets to the Virgin and odes to duchesses. "But I avenged myself like a Barbary Moor. I introduced him to Cotorraso who is giving him a lecture on oils. Look how the poor wretch is suffering!"

The gamblers looked round, and saw, in fact, the two men in a corner together. The Count was haranguing vehemently, and holding his victim by the lapel of his coat. The unhappy poet, with a rueful countenance, trying to give signals of distress by glances, stood like a man who is being taken to prison.

"Arbos, do you think I am sufficiently avenged?"

He turned on his heel and hastily left the room, not to weaken the effect of his sarcasm. Thus, every evening, he made his appearance at two or three houses, where his wit and cleverness were the subject of constant praise.

The servants presently came with trays of chocolate and ices. Cobo Ramirez seized a little Japanese table, carried it off into a corner, sat down to it, and prepared to stuff. Pepa Frias looked about her, and seeing General Patiño, called to him.

"Here, General, take my cards, I am tired of playing. Hand your's over to Pepe, Clementina, and let us go into the other room."

The two gentlemen took their seats, and the ladies went towards the drawing-room; but, on their way, Pepa said:

"I want to speak with you on a matter of importance; let us go somewhere else."

Clementina stared with amazement.

"Shall we go into the dining-room?"

"No, we had better go up to your dressing-room."

Her friend was more surprised than ever, but, shrugging her shoulders, she said: "Just as you please; it must be something very serious."

They went upstairs, Clementina imagining that her friend wished to speak of Pepe Castro, and their relations to each other. And as, to tell the truth, the subject had greatly lost its interest, she walked on feeling very indifferent, not to say considerably bored. When they were alone in the boudoir, Pepa took her hands, and looking her straight in the face, she said:

"Tell me, Clementina, do you know how your husband's affairs stand?"

It was a home-thrust; Clementina, though she had no exact information, had heard of her husband's losses, and of his increasing and delirious passion for gambling. And in a discussion on money matters they had recently had, he had frightened her in order to obtain her signature; also she could see that he was every day more absent-minded and depressed. But though she could give her thoughts to such matters for a few minutes now and again, the complicated bustle of her life as a woman of fashion, seconded by her dislike of all disagree-

able subjects, soon put them out of her head. It never for an instant occurred to her that such losses might seriously affect her comfort or convenience, her ostentatious display, or her caprices. Osorio's conduct gave her every reason to continue in this faith, for he had never desired her to retrench in her extravagance. But the viper was lurking at the bottom of her heart, and at a lash like this from Pepa it began to gnaw.

"My nusband's affairs?" she stammered, as though she did not understand. "I never heard. I do not inquire."

"Well, I am told that he has been losing a great deal of money lately."

"I dare say," exclaimed her friend, with a shrug of supreme contempt.

"But you may find your hair singed, too, my dear. Is your own money safe?"

"I do not know what you are driving at. I tell you I know nothing of business."

"But in this case you had better gain some information."

"But I tell you I do not trouble my head about it, and beg you will change the subject."

In proportion as Pepa was obstinate Clementina was reserved and haughty. Her pride, always on the alert, led her to suppose that this lady had plotted for this discussion on purpose to mortify her.

"The thing is, my dear, as I feel bound to tell you, that your husband does not speculate with his own money only," said the widow, driven to bay.

"Ah! Now I begin to see! You have a few hundred dollars in Osorio's hands, and are afraid of losing them," said Clementina with a satirical smile, and with difficulty swallowing down her wrath.

Pepa turned pale. A surge of rage rose from her heart to her lips, and she was on the point of casting her fortune overboard and simply railing like a market woman—a style for which she was especially gifted—but an instinct of self-interest,

of self-preservation, checked the outburst. If she were to quarrel with her friend, or even to offend her, all hope of saving her capital would be lost. She perceived that the better part was not to provoke her implacable nature, but to hope that friendship, or even pride, might prompt her to an act of generosity. With a great effort she controlled her annoyance at Clementina's supercilious and arrogant gaze, and said, dejectedly:

"Well, yes; I own it. Your husband has in his hands the whole of my little possessions. If I lose it I shall be absolutely destitute. I do not know what will become of me. I would rather beg than be dependent on my son-in-law."

"Beg! No, you need not do that. I will engage you as my companion in the place of Pascuala," said Clementina scornfully, for her pride was by no means propitiated.

Pepa was more stung by this than she had ever been before, but still she controlled herself.

"Well, my dear," she said, again taking her hands with a caressing gesture, "do not fling your millions in my teeth. If I come to worry you about the matter, it is because I regard you as my best friend. I know, of course, that there is a great deal of exaggeration, and that envy is rampant. More than half that is said about Osorio's losses is probably not true."

"And even if it were, it really matters very little to me. Only to-day my stepmother told me that she meant to leave me her whole fortune."

Pepa's eyes opened very wide.

"The Duchess! And she cannot have less than fifty million francs! Poor soul! I am afraid she is very ill."

"Pretty bad."

At this moment arrogance had the upper hand in Clementina of every instinct of affection. She spoke the two words "pretty bad" in a tone of freezing indifference.

The two ladies had soon come to a perfect understanding. Pepa, still affecting an easy manner, flattered her friend in

every possible way: she was beautiful, rich, a model of elegance. Clementina allowed herself to be flattered, inhaling the incense with intense satisfaction. In return she promised Pepa that she should not lose a centime of her capital.

They went down the stairs with their arms round each other's waist, chattering like a pair of magpies. As they reached the drawing-room door, before parting, they embraced and kissed.

And it did not occur to either of them that the embrace and kiss were those of a corpse—the corpse of a good and generous woman.

CHAPTER IX.

RAIMUNDO'S LOVE AFFAIRS.

CLEMENTINA's new love adventure went on in a manner no less childish than pleasing for her. After the inopportune act of heedlessness which had brought her to so much shame, she took care for some days not to look up at Raimundo, though the greetings he waved her were more expressive and affectionate than ever. This fancy—for it deserves no better name—was, however, taking such deep root in her imagination that she determined to indulge it again, and on each occasion she found the young man's opera-glasses directed towards her. Finally, one day, as she turned the corner, she kissed her hand to him.

"Really, I have lost all sense of shame!" said she to herself, with a blush. And it was so true that she did the same again whenever she went by.

But the situation, though romantic and novel, began to weigh upon her. Her impetuous temperament would never allow her to enjoy the present in peace; it drove her to seek further, to precipitate events; though not unfrequently, instead of procuring her pleasure, they only left her entangled in the ruins of the dream-palace she had raised. On this occasion, however, she had better reason than usual for wishing to get out of the predicament. It was altogether such a false position as to verge on the ridiculous; and she owned as much to herself in her most secret soul.

"In point of fact, I am treating this boy like a dancing bear."

But though she every day determined to put an end to the adventure by going out no more on foot, or by passing by Raimundo's house without looking up, bowing to him coldly at the utmost, she had not resolution enough to carry out her purpose, nor even to cease sending her greeting up to the corner window. One thing still puzzled her, and that was, that the young man, seeing the evident tokens she had given of her change of mind, and the rather humiliating proofs of her liking for him, had never failed in his obedience—never followed her, nor attempted to meet her out walking. This at last piqued her vanity; she thought he played his new part with too much zeal. And thinking this she was sometimes quite angry with him; but then as she went past and saw him so smiling, so happy, so eager to bow to her, the black mood of her pride was dispelled, and her heart was again full to overflowing, of sympathy for the boy, and of the whimsical desire to love and to be loved by him.

How would it all end? In nothing, probably. Nevertheless, she did her utmost to carry on the affair, and bring it to some definite issue; of that there is no doubt. And her wish being thwarted by causes which she could not clearly understand, it grew, till by degrees it became a fierce appetite. One afternoon, when disappointment and bitterness possessed her breast, as she was walking down the Calle de Serrano, seriously pondering on giving up this ridiculous adventure, as she passed beneath the window, after bowing to the young man seated there, she felt a handful of loose flowers fall upon her. She looked up, understanding that it was he who had flung them, and gave him a smile of tender gratitude. This shower refreshed her spirit and revived her drooping fancy. Now she only thought of some way of bringing him nearer to her. She thought of writing to beg his forgiveness for her visit and her stern words, but it was too late for that. Then she fancied that perhaps among her friends, particularly among journalists, there might be some one who would know him, and by whom she might send him some civil message. But this

idea she dismissed as dangerous. She almost thought of giving him some signal to come down to her, and explaining herself verbally, but this again she did not dare. It was too humiliating.

Chance came to her aid, solving the dilemma to her satisfaction when she least expected it. They met one evening at the theatre. Raimundo, whose year of deep mourning was nearly at an end, now occasionally went out, and he and his sister were in the stalls. Clementina was in a box just above them. They exchanged bows, and then for some time there was a cross-fire of glances and smiles, which attracted Aurelia's attention.

"Who is it? Have you been meeting that lady again?"

"No."

"Then what is the meaning of your smiles? You seem to be intimate friends.

"I do not know," said the brother, somewhat embarrassed. "She is always very friendly to me. Perhaps she thinks she offended me when she came to our rooms, and wishes to mollify me."

Between the first and second acts, a beautiful spray of camellia was handed to Aurelia by a flower-seller.

"From the lady in box number eleven."

Aurelia looked up, and saw Clementina gazing and smiling at her. She and Raimundo bowed their thanks, Aurelia blushing deeply.

"Do not you think," said her brother, "that I ought to go upstairs and thank her?"

It was but natural. Raimundo, when the curtain next fell, left his sister for a moment, and went up to the Osorios' box. A happy smile beamed on Clementina's face as she saw the young man at the door. She received him as an old friend, bade him sit down by her side, and began a conversation in an undertone, completely neglecting Pascuala whom she had brought with her. Happily for this lady, Bonifacio came in before long; he never took a stall at any theatre where he knew that the Osorios had a box.

"I am glad to see that you have no grudge against me," said she in a low voice, with an insinuating glance. "That is right. It shows you have both a good heart and good sense. I must frankly confess that I was utterly mistaken in my estimate of your conduct and character. I can only assure you that when I came out of your house, I would gladly have turned back to beg your pardon. If not in words, in looks and gestures I have asked it many times since, as you will have understood." And she proceeded, in the most masterly way, to give him three or four more encouraging hints, which quite turned poor Raimundo's head—that is to say, left him speechless, confused, and fascinated; just as she would have him, in short. At the same time she skilfully accounted for the rather singular display of liking for him which she herself was ashamed to recall.

Without leaving him time to reply, she inquired after his sister, his health, and his butterflies. Raimundo answered briefly, not out of indifference, but for lack of worldly ease of manner. But she was nothing daunted, she became more and more affectionate, entangling him in a perfect maze of flattering speeches and inviting glances. At the moment when she was most fluent, it might almost be said inspired to conquer her youthful adorer, suddenly, in the passage between the stalls, Pepe Castro appeared on the scene, in evening dress, the ends of his moustache waxed to needle points, the curls of his hair waving coquettishly over his temples, his whole air easy, self-sufficient, and scornful. He first cast his fascinating and Olympic eye over the stalls, subjugating every marriageable damsel who happened to be occupying one, and then, with the serene dignity of an eagle's soaring flight, he raised it to box number eleven. He could not suppress a start of surprise. Who was this with whom Clementina was on such intimate terms? He did not know this young man. He brought his diminutive opera-glasses to bear on him—no, he had never seen him in his life. Clementina, conscious of her lover's surprise, after returning his greeting, became doubly

amiable to Raimundo, addressing herself solely to him, leaning over to speak to him, and going through endless manœuvres to attract the attention of the illustrious "Savage." She felt a malignant glee in doing this. Castro was now absolutely indifferent to her. Raimundo returned Pepe's impertinent stare through his opera-glasses, by a curious glance now and then, for he had not the honour of knowing the "husband's bugbear!"

Then reflecting that his sister would be losing patience, though he could keep an eye on her from the box, he rose to depart.

"We are friends, are we not?" said the lady, holding his hand. "Remember me affectionately to your sister. I owe her, too, an apology for my strange and unexpected visit. Tell her I shall call on her some day and take her by surprise in the midst of her household cares. I take the greatest interest in you both—a brother and sister, both so young—good night, good night."

When he found himself by his sister's side once more, feeling rather bewildered, Aurelia said to him:

"How very handsome that lady is! But still I cannot see that she is like mamma."

Raimundo, who at the moment had forgotten the likeness, was taken by surprise.

"Oh, there is a sort of look—an air," he stammered out.

So now it was no more than an air. The young man was conscious of a vague remorse. The impression Clementina now produced on his mind was not that respectful devotion which had possessed him before they had made acquaintance in so strange a manner.

Pepe Castro, when he saw him in the stalls, simply stared at him, hoping, perhaps to annihilate him. As he concluded that the red-haired youth did not belong to the elevated sphere in which he himself moved, it occurred to him—for his imagination was lively—that this might be the youth of whose pertinacity Clementina had formerly complained. As was but

natural this did not prejudice him in Alcázar's favour. Raimundo himself was too much absorbed in contemplating the Osorios' box to notice his rival's determined stare, and Pepe, tired of it at last, went up to join Clementina. He seated himself by her side in the very place occupied shortly before y Alcázar, who, on seeing him there, was aware of a strange *malaise*, an obscure dejection which he did not even attempt to define. Nevertheless, he observed that the lady smiled a great deal, and that the gentleman was very grave, also that she found time to cast frequent glances in his direction, whereat her companion grew more and more sullen and gloomy.

"Have you noticed how that lady gazes down at you?" said Aurelia to her brother. "She seems to have taken quite a fancy to you."

"Nonsense!" he replied, turning very red. "Such a fellow as I am too! If it were that gentleman who is sitting by her now."

Aurelia protested, laughing, that her brother was far better looking than that doll of a man, with pink cheeks like a ballet-dancer's.

When the performance was over, Raimundo, not without a pang of jealousy, found Clementina waiting in the lobby for her carriage, attended by this same man. But she greeted him so eagerly, that Castro, who was becoming uneasy, turned to give him a long and scrutinising stare.

For some days after this, the young entomologist anxiously expected Clementina to stop at the door, and come up to pay the promised visit. But he was disappointed. The lady constantly went by with her light brisk step, bowed as she approached, and before she turned the corner, waved him an adieu. Every time she passed the door, Raimundo's heart sank, and at last he grew angry. "Pshaw! She has forgotten all about it," he said to himself. "I shall never, probably, speak to her again, since we never by any chance meet anywhere."

He did his best to assist chance, by going more often to the play, where he never saw her. At the opera, he would certainly have found her, but he never was so bold as to go there for fear she might think he had renewed his pursuit. Why he had taken it into his head that she would call at any one hour more than at another it is impossible to say. But in the end his surprise and agitation were unbounded when one morning Clementina really made her appearance. This time she asked for the Señorita. Aurelia received her in the drawing-room, and immediately sent for her brother. By the time he appeared the lady was sitting on the sofa and chatting with the frank ease of an old acquaintance.

"This visit is not to you, you understand," said she, giving him her hand.

"I should never have dared to imagine that it was," he replied, shyly pressing her fingers.

"There is no knowing. I do not think you conceited, but a woman must always be on her guard."

There was something not quite genuine in the candour of her jesting tone. Her voice was slightly tremulous, and there was a pale circle round her eyes, a sure sign of some emotion which weighs on the mind. Her visit was short, but she found time to charm the young girl by her delicate flattery and effusive offers. She made her promise to return her visit soon; in the evening if she preferred to meet no one, and they would have a long chat together. She would show Aurelia the house, and some work she was doing. The girl's loneliness and youth had really made an impression on her, and if, in fact, she bore some resemblance to their mother, as Raimundo said, she felt she had some claim on her affection.

"Well, then, when you are bored here by yourself, come to my house—it is such a little way—and we will bore each other. That will be a variety, at any rate."

Poor Aurelia, bewildered by her visitor's condescension and unfamiliar worldly tone, could only smile in reply. When Clementina rose to go, she said:

"I rely on you, Alcázar, to see that your sister keeps her promise. As for you—you can do as you please. I never press my society on a *savant*, for I know one may be boring him when one least suspects it."

She had quite recovered her balance, and spoke in an easy protecting tone, with almost a maternal air. Even on the staircase she paused to reiterate all her friendly advances. She would not allow Raimundo to escort her to the house-door; she went down alone, leaving a trail of perfume which he enjoyed more than his sister did. When their door was closed on her, Aurelia did not speak; and she replied to her brother's rapturous eulogies in so few words that his ardour was soon dashed.

It was too true: the feeling of filial adoration which the young professor had felt at first for the lady of his dreams was fast dying away, or rather was being transformed into another, less saintly though still akin to it. In him, as in every man who lives out of the society of women, and exclusively devoted to study, the instincts of sex and the revelation of the divine law of love were sudden and intense. On the very next day he urged Aurelia to return Clementina's call, though he expressed his wish with some timidity and hesitation. His sister, however, insisted on the propriety of allowing some little time to elapse, and he submitted. At length the visit was paid. Aurelia spent an afternoon in the Señora's boudoir. Raimundo, after much deliberation, did not venture to accompany her.

Three or four days later Clementina again called to invite them both to her box at the Opera that evening. It was a terrible joy. Raimundo had not a dress coat, and Aurelia's wardrobe was not much better furnished. However, they went. A relation lent Raimundo a coat, and Aurelia wore the best she had. Next day Raimundo ordered a dress suit, of the first tailor in Madrid; nor was this all: without saying anything to his sister, he went to the box-office of the Opera-house and subscribed for a stall as near as possible to the Osorios' box, and for the same evenings.

Thanks to Raimundo's efforts, the intimacy grew apace, though his sister, while she spoke warmly of her new friend's kindness, opposed a passive resistance to all familiarity with her. Do what she might, she could not forget the extraordinary way in which their acquaintance had begun, nor the sense of falsity with which Clementina had impressed her. Raimundo, fully aware of all this, did his utmost by direct and indirect means to conquer her suspicions.

Aurelia was plain, rather than pretty, with sound common sense, and an upright spirit. Her adoration for her brother, inherited from her mother, did not blind her to the weak points in his character. He was easily impressed and as easily led, and still very puerile. In fact, in a certain sense, she represented the masculine and he the feminine element in the house. He was easily moved to tears; she, with great difficulty. He was liable to whimsical alarms and bewilderments, amounting sometimes almost to hallucinations, her nervous system was calm and well balanced; she was healthy and sound, he frail and placid. During the months immediately following on his mother's death, Raimundo, making a great effort, with the idea of being his sister's protector, had shown more manliness and firmness; but, as time went on, his nature reasserted itself, and he fell into his childish fancies and womanly susceptibilities again, in proportion as she developed a resolute, honest, and well-balanced character.

It cost Clementina hardly an effort to fascinate and subjugate the young naturalist. Sometimes the young people went to her, and sometimes she to them; or she would fetch them to go to the theatre, or out driving with her, and thus they soon met almost every day. The first evening that Pepe Castro met Alcázar in the Osorios' drawing-room he perfectly understood the situation, and it filled him with rage.

"So this precious hussy is taking up with a baby!" he muttered between his teeth. "They all come to such folly at last."

He thought of insulting the boy and provoking him to fight; but he soon saw that this could do him no good. What could

he gain by it? Absolutely nothing, for Clementina would only hate him the more, and the scandal would betray his discomfiture—all the more ignominious for him, as his successful rival was a boy, whom no one knew anything about. So he came to the prudent conclusion that he would not wear his heart for daws to peck at, but would for a while leave his mistress to her own devices. By-and-by, perhaps, she would tire of playing with this pet lamb and call the sheep back to the fold.

Alcázar was not such a boy as Castro thought him; he was three-and-twenty. But his face was so youthful and delicate that he did not look more than eighteen. His health was variable and frail; especially, since his mother's death, he had been liable to attacks of the brain, when he lost sometimes his sight, and sometimes the power of speech, complicated with other evils, but happily of very short duration. He was a frequent prey to melancholy, ending in a violent crisis and floods of tears, like a hysterical woman. He was terrified of spiders; the sight of a surgical instrument gave him the horrors. Sometimes he suffered acute anguish from a dread of going mad; at others his fear was lest he should kill himself against his will. He never would have any kind of weapon within reach, and for fear of throwing himself from the balcony he always had his bedroom window locked at night and placed the key in his sister's keeping: she was the only witness and confidant of his vagaries. They were the outcome, partly of his temperament, and partly of the effeminate training he had received. But he kept them a secret, as every man does who suffers in this way—many more than are ever suspected of it—and by constant watchfulness he kept them under control, knowing how ridiculous a man thus constituted must appear.

It may easily be supposed what his fate must inevitably be when a woman like Clementina—a beautiful and experienced coquette—had set her heart on conquest. At first his extreme bashfulness kept him from understanding the lady's aim and tactics. He took her gracious bows and inviting smiles for the

expression of her sympathy with their orphaned loneliness. And when she had made friends with them, and shown him every indication of her liking, when his sister even had given him a warning hint, he still could not believe that there could be anything between them beyond a more or less affectionate good-fellowship, protecting and motherly on her side, devoted and ardent on his. However, the elixir of love which Clementina shed drop by drop on his lips, as it were, made its way to his heart. When he was least expecting it, he found that he was madly in love. But the discovery filled him with bashful fears, and he thought that he could never dare to declare it. Though his idol's demeanour towards him, and constant demonstrations of sympathetic regard were enough to justify any hopes on his part, it seemed to him so strange as to be impossible that a shy and inexperienced man, devoid of all worldly advantages, should find favour with so rich and so beautiful a woman. Nor could he entirely free himself from the remorse which stung him from time to time. It was her resemblance to his mother which had first attracted him in Clementina. Was not his passion a profanation?

But in spite of his remorse, of his timidity, and of his reason, Raimundo felt himself every day more enslaved by this woman. Clementina, to be sure, brought every weapon into play; and she had many at her disposal. In proportion as she found her youthful adorer more bashful, her own audacity and coolness increased. This is almost always the case, but in the present instance, circumstances made the contrast all the more conspicuous. Timidity in him amounted to a disease, a peculiarity which he full well knew to be ridiculous while he could not overcome it; on the contrary, the greater the efforts he made, the more his nervousness betrayed itself. At first he could speak to her with sufficient calmness, and could allow himself some little compliment or jest, but he had now lost all his presence of mind, he could not go near her without losing his head, nor take her hand without trembling; if she did but look at him his cheeks tingled.

Clementina could not help smiling at these innocent symptoms of love. She was full of curiosity, and happy to find herself still handsome enough to inspire the boy with such a passion. Sometimes she would amuse herself by playing the fish, making him blush, and behaving with the license and frivolity of a *grisette*. At others she affected to fall in with his melancholy mood, making eyes at him like a school-girl; or, again, she treated him with tender familiarity, inquiring into his life, his work, and his thoughts, like a fond mother or elder sister. Then Raimundo would recover his spirits a little, and dare to look the goddess in the face. Clementina would occasionally cajole him by an affectation of scientific tastes, going up to his study and covering the table and the floor with his butterfly-boxes. This, which if any one else had done it, would have brought the house about their ears, only made the young naturalist smile.

But by this time the lady's acquaintances were beginning to make remarks on her last and most extravagant love-affair, assuming, of course, that it had gone much further than was really the case. One Saturday evening at the Osorios' house Pepa Frias ended by exclaiming to three or four of the "Savages," with whom she had been discussing the matter:

"You will see. Clementina will end by falling in love with a Newfoundland dog or a journalist!"

When Raimundo came into the room with his rosy, melancholy, cherubic face, his diffident, embarrassed air, every one looked at him with curiosity: there were smiles, murmurs, witticisms, and stupid remarks. He was much discussed. In general, and especially by men, Clementina was thought ridiculous; some of the ladies, however, looked more kindly on the youth, thought his candid looks very attractive, and sympathised with her whim.

Thus our young friend was regarded as *amant en titre* to Clementina before he had dared to kiss her finger-tips, or even dreamed of it. He was perfectly miserable if she was in the least disdainful, and was as happy as an angel if she made the

smallest show of affection. Clementina was in no hurry to hear his declaration, though fully determined that he should make it. It amused her to watch the progress of the affair, noting the development of his passion, and the phenomena to which it gave rise. She had had her fill of ravings, and thought it delightful to be adored with this dumb devotion, and play the part of a goddess. A mere glance was enough to turn this worshipper red or pale, a word made him happy or reduced him to despair.

Raimundo went to the Opera whenever Clementina was to be there; he went up to pay his respects to her in her box, and often, by her invitation, sat there during two or three acts. Then she would retire to the back of the box and chat with him there, screened by the curtains. When she was tired of this, or if some important scene was being sung on the stage, she would lapse into silence, turn her back on her companion, and listen to the performance. Raimundo, his ears full of the echo of her tones, and his heart on fire from the ardour of her gaze, would also remain silent, though, in truth, more attentive to the music in his brain than to that performed for his delectation. Sure of not being seen, he could contemplate the alabaster shoulders of his idol with religious absorption, and bend down his head, on pretence of hearing better, to breathe the perfume she used, shutting his eyes and allowing it to intoxicate him. One evening he put his face so close to her head that he actually dared to let his lips touch the heavy plaits of her beautiful hair. No sooner had he done it than he was in great alarm lest Clementina should have felt it; but she sat unmoved, listening ecstatically to the music. At the same time, as the young man could see, her eyes sparkled with a conscious smile. Encouraged by this success, whenever she had her hair done in this particular way, he ventured, with the greatest precaution, and after much hesitation, to press it to his lips. The pleasure was so acute and delightful that it dwelt on his lips for many days.

But then, one evening—whether because she was out of

temper or because it was her pleasure to mortify him—she treated him with such contempt all the time he was in the box, leaving him to entertain Pascuala while she chatted with some more aristocratic youth of her acquaintance, that poor Raimundo was thrown into despair. He had not even courage enough to take leave; he stood, pale and crestfallen, a frown of anxiety furrowing his brow. Clementina stole a glance at him from time to time. When the other gentleman made his bow, Raimundo, too, was about to take leave. The lady detained him, holding his hand.

"Nay, wait a minute, Alcázar; I have something to say to you," and she withdrew, as usual, to the back of the box and began chatting with all her frank amiability. The young man breathed again; still, when she turned away to listen to the music, he was so unstrung and confused that he did not dare to kiss her hair, though it was plaited low, and the opportunity was propitious.

After a long pause Clementina suddenly turned on him and asked in a low voice:

"Why do you not kiss my hair, as you always do?"

His amazement was quite a shock to him. All the blood rushed to his heart, leaving him as pale as a corpse; then it mounted to his face, turning it to the colour of a poppy.

"I—your hair," he gasped abjectly. And he was forced to cling to a chair-back to save himself from falling.

"Do not be frightened, my dear fellow," she exclaimed, laying her hand on his. "If I allowed it, that is sufficient proof that I did not object." But seeing that he was gazing at her wildly, as if he did not understand her, she added: "Perhaps you imagine that I did not know that you care for me a little?"

The young man gave a convulsive cry.

"Yes, I have known it for some time," she went on in a still lower voice, and speaking into his ear. "But there is something which you do not know. And that is, that I care for you."

Casting a hasty glance round the house, to make sure that they were not observed, she took his hands in hers, and her breath was warm on his cheek as she said : "Yes, I love you—beyond anything you can imagine."

Clementina had not anticipated the effect of these words on her susceptible and effeminate adorer. The violent emotions he had gone through, and now the high tide of happiness, so completely upset him that he began to cry like a child. She hastily drew him into a corner, filling up the space between the curtains with her person. Her face was radiant with happiness.

Her conquest, in fact, had a novelty about it which quite enchanted her. This lover was hardly more than a boy ; nor was he one of the herd of puppies and dandies whom she met at every turn, all cast in the same mould, devoid of all originality, having all the same vices, the same vanities, uttering almost the same jests. Raimundo was different from these, not merely by his humble position and secluded life, nor even by his talents and culture, but most of all by his character. How sweet a nature was this boy's! How innocent, how sensitive, how refined, and yet how impassioned! Accustomed as she was to the monotonous type of Pepe Castros, every new psychological aspect, every burst of enthusiasm, every alarm and every joy in her new friend, was to Clementina a delightful surprise. She was never tired of studying his mind, and would sometimes affect to doubt his love for her.

"Do you really love me? Are you sure? Remember, I am an old woman; I might be your mother."

And Raimundo always replied with some fond caress and a tearful glance, which revealed the depth of his devotion.

From that memorable evening Raimundo could think of nothing but Clementina. To him the whole world had shrunk into one person, and that person a woman. Not only did he live and breathe for her, but he thought of her all day and dreamed of her all night. At first the lady had received him at her own house, but she, ere long, thought this unwise, and

they took rooms in a neighbouring street, a small entresol, which they furnished with taste.

His life had undergone a complete change. From living in absolute seclusion he suddenly came out into the world of fashion: theatres, balls, dinners, riding-parties, and shooting expeditions. Clementina bound him to her chariot, and exhibited him in every drawing-room as if she were proud of him. For our young friend, with his delicate features, gentle temper, and superior intelligence, became popular wherever he went; no one stopped to ask whether he were rich or poor, noble or plebeian.

Aurelia sometimes accompanied him, but always against her will. Though she dared not contravene her brother's line of conduct, it was easy to see that she condemned it in her heart, and was out of her sphere at the Osorios'. She had become taciturn and grave, and her eyes, when she bent them on Raimundo, took a sad and gloomy expression, as though she feared disaster. Clementina did all she could to win her, but she made no way in the girl's affections; and under Aurelia's modest smiles and blushes she fancied she could detect a vein of hostility which often disconcerted her.

Señora de Osorio persisted in the lavish expenditure she had always indulged in, notwithstanding the rumours of imminent ruin which had so greatly alarmed Pepa Frias. But the catastrophe did not come as had been prophesied. The banker contrived to stave it off, giving it to be understood by those who had money in his hands that there was nothing to be got by falling on him tooth and nail, as they would not by such means save one quarter of their capital. On the other hand, they had only to wait to recover every penny. His wife must, ere long, come into an immense fortune. His creditors listened to reason, kept their own counsel as to the state of his affairs, and only stipulated that Clementina's signature should be affixed, as well as her husband's, to every renewed bill. Soon after, fortune favoured Osorio in the turns of the money-market, and he was able to launch out once more, though men

of business looked askance at his dealings, and unanimousl declared that the crash was only deferred. His wife, feelin that she was safe at any rate, thought no more of such unplea sant subjects. It was only when she went to her father' house and saw Doña Carmen's pale, worn face, that her hear throbbed with a feeling which she was loth to confess even t herself, and which she strove to drown under the sound o affectionate words and kisses.

Raimundo's love was an extraordinary joy to her. She fel herself borne, as she had never been before, on a wave o devoted and poetic passion which rocked and soothed her She was well content to play the goddess. She enjoye showing herself as now amiable and tender, and again gravel terrible, putting her adorer to a thousand proofs, to mak quite sure, as she said, that he was indeed wholly hers.

But the habit of dealing with men of a different stamp le her into fatal mistakes, which grieved and hurt the youth One day, in their own little rooms, she said, with a smile:

"I have a present for you, Mundo," as she called him for a pet name.

She rose and took out of her muff a very pretty little note-book.

"Oh, that is most sweet!" he exclaimed pressing it to his lips. "I will always use it."

But on opening it he was struck with consternation. It was full of bank-notes.

"You have forgotten to take the money out," he said handing her the pocket-book.

"I have not forgotten it. It is for you."

"For me?" he said turning pale.

"Do you not wish for it?" she said, somewhat abashed and blushing scarlet.

"No," he said firmly, "certainly not."

Clementina dared not insist. She took the pocket-book, turned out the bank-notes, and returned it to him. There was a pause of embarrassed silence. Raimundo sat with his elbow

on the table, his cheek in his hand, serious and thoughtful. She watched him out of the corner of her eyes, half angry and half curious.

At last a bright smile lighted up her face. She rose from her seat, and taking his head between her hands, she said gaily:

"Well done! This action raises you in my esteem. Still, you may take money from me without a blush. Am I not your mamma?"

Raimundo said nothing; he only kissed the hands that had held him fast. Money was never again spoken of between them.

But still, in spite of his three-and-twenty years, there was something childlike about the lad which was an infinite delight to his mistress. It was due chiefly to his solitary and effeminate youth. He was very easily taken in, and as easily amused; he never had those fits of black boredom which afflict the spoilt worldling; he never uttered one of the caustic and ironical speeches which are common even on a lover's lips. His glee was effervescent and boyish to the verge of the ridiculous. He thought it fun to play follow-my-leader behind Clementina in their little lodgings, or to hide and startle her. He would entertain her with conjuring tricks, which perhaps showed some intelligence; or they would play at cards with absorbed attention, as though they were gambling for large sums; or they would dance to the music of some grinding organ, that had stopped within hearing. Then they would eat bon-bons for a match, seeing who would get through most. One day he was bent on making pine-apple ice; he declared that he was great at making ices. All the apparatus was borrowed from a café in the neighbourhood, and after stirring and turning for some time, he at last turned out an ugly and untempting mass, which so greatly depressed him that Clementina actually swallowed a large dose of the liquid. He was fond of mimicking the accent and manner of any one he had met at her house; and this he did to such perfection, that Clementina laughed

with all her heart; nay, she sometimes entreated him to cease, for it hurt her to laugh so much. Raimundo had the gift of observing the most trifling peculiarities of the persons he met, and imitating them to perfection. It was difficult to believe that the person mimicked was not speaking. However, it was only in the strictest confidence that he displayed this accomplishment.

Sometimes if he was in a merry mood he would perform a Royal reception. He hastily erected a throne in the middle of the room, on which Clementina must sit. Then the Ministers and high political personages in turn approached the Queen and spoke a short address. Clementina, who knew them every one, could guess who each was from only a few words. Raimundo, having often been present at the meetings of Congress, had picked up the accent and gesture of each to the life. He was particularly happy in his imitation of Jimenez Arbos, whom he knew well from meeting him at the Osorios'. Of course, after each speech, he kissed the sovereign's hand with a reverent bow, and resumed the paper cocked-hat he had made for the occasion. These childish games amused the lady, and helped to open a heart which had always been closed by pride or ennui. She came away from their long interviews quite rejuvenescent, her eyes sparkling, her step lighter, and ready to bestow a nod on persons to whom as a rule she would vouchsafe only the coldest bow.

And then Raimundo would amaze her by some inconceivably childish and innocent proceeding. One day, when she noiselessly entered their rooms--for each had a key—she found him industriously sweeping the floor. He blushed to the ears with confusion, at being discovered. Clementina, in fits of laughter, covered his face with kisses.

"Really, child, you are too delightful!" she exclaimed.

CHAPTER X.

MATTERS OF BUSINESS.

IT was a very busy morning in Salabert's counting-house. Some large payments had to be made. The Duke himself had presided over the transactions and helped the cashier to count the notes. In spite of the many years he had spent in handling money, he could never part with a large sum without his hand shaking a little. He was nervous now, and absorbed, nibbling his cigar, but not spitting as usual, for his throat was dry. More than once he checked the clerk, believing that he was allowing two notes to pass for one, but on each occasion he was in error; the man was very dexterous at his work. When it was all done, the Duke withdrew to his private room, where he found waiting M. de Fayolle, the great importer of foreign horses, which he supplied to all the aristocracy of Madrid.

"*Bon-jour*, *Monsieur*," said the Duke, clapping him roughly on the shoulder. "Have you got another screw you want me to take off your hands?"

"Oh, Monsieur le Duc, the horses I sold you are not screws, not a bit of it. You have the best cattle that ever passed through my stables," said the Frenchman with a foreign accent and a servile smile.

"All the cast-off rubbish from Paris is what you sell to me. But do not suppose that I am taken in. I have known it a long time, Monsieur, a very long time. Only I can never look in your cherubic and smiling face without giving way."

M. Fayolle was smiling at the moment, showing his large yellow teeth from ear to ear.

"The face is the mirror of the soul, Monsieur le Duc; you may rely on me never to offer you anything but what is absolutely first-rate. Has Apollyon turned out badly?"

"Hm. So-so."

"You must surely be jesting! I saw him in the street the other day, in your phaeton. Every one turned round to look at him."

For some minutes they discussed various horses which Requena had bought of the Frenchman; he found fault with every one of them. Fayolle defended them with the enthusiasm of a dealer and a connoiseur. Presently, at a pause, he looked at his watch, saying:

"I will not detain you any longer. I came for the settlement of that last little account."

The Duke's face clouded. Then he said half laughing and half angry:

"Why, my good man, you are never happy unless you are getting money out of me."

At the same time he put his hand in his pocket and took out his note-book. M. Fayolle still smiled, saying that he could not bear to ask for it, knowing that the Duke was such a pauper, and that it would be dreadful indeed to see him reduced to beggary, a delicate joke which Requena did not seem to hear, being absorbed in counting out the paper. He laid out seven notes of one hundred dollars each and handed them to Fayolle, ringing a bell for a clerk to bring a form of receipt. Fayolle, on his part, counted them, and then said:

"You have made a mistake, Monsieur le Duc, the account is for eight hundred dollars, and you have only given me seven."

Salabert did not seem to have heard him. With his eyes half-closed, and shifting his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other, he sat silent, looking at the pocket-book, after fastening it with an elastic band.

"This is one hundred dollars short," Fayolle reiterated.

"What? Short? Count once more. It is impossible!"

The horse-dealer counted.

"Three thousand five hundred pesetas."

"You see, I could not be wrong."

"But the horse was to cost four thousand. That was a bargain."

The Duke's face expressed the most candid surprise.

"What! Four thousand pesetas? No, my friend, no. The horse was to be three thousand five hundred. It was on that understanding that I bought it."

"Monsieur le Duc, you really are under a mistake," said Fayolle, now quite grave. "You must remember that we finally agreed on four thousand."

"I remember all about it. It is you who have a bad memory. Here," he added to a clerk who came in with the receipt-form, "go downstairs, one of you, to the stables, and ask Benigno how much I told him I was to give for Apollyon?"

And at the same time, taking advantage of the moment when Fayolle looked at the messenger, he made a significant grimace at the man. The coachman's answer by the clerk was that the horse was to be three thousand five hundred pesetas.

Thereupon the dealer grew angry. He was quite positive that the bargain had stood at eight hundred dollars, and it was in this belief that he had delivered it. Otherwise the horse should never have left his stable.

Requena allowed him to talk himself out, only uttering grunts of dissent, without exciting himself in the smallest degree. Only when Fayolle talked of having the horse back, he said in in a lazy tone:

"Then you evidently have some one in your eye who will give you eight hundred, and you want to be off the bargain?"

"Monsieur le Duc, I swear to you that it is nothing of the kind. Only I am positive I am right."

The banker was seized by an opportune fit of coughing; his eyes were bloodshot, and his cheeks turned purple. Then he deliberately wiped his mouth and rose, and said in his most boorish manner:

"Bless me, man! Don't put yourself out over a few miserable pesetas."

But he did not produce them.

The Frenchman was willing to take back the horse, but this again he failed to achieve. There was a short silence. Fayolle was within an ace of flying out, and making a fool of himself. But he restrained himself, reflecting that this would do no good, and that sueing the Duke would do even less. Who would be counsel for the plaintiff against such a man as Requena? So he resigned himself to his fate, and took his leave, the Duke escorting him to the door with much politeness, and clapping him affectionately on the shoulder.

When the banker returned to his seat at the table, his eyes glistened under his heavy eyelids with a smile of sarcastic triumph. A few minutes after he again rang the bell.

"Go and inquire whether the Duchess is alone, or if she has visitors," he said to the man who answered it. And while the servant went on the errand he sat motionless, leaning back in his chair, with his hands folded, meditating.

"Padre Ortega is with the Duchess," was the answer in a few minutes.

Salabert "pshawed" impatiently, and sank into thought once more. He had made up his mind to have a solemn discussion with his wife on ways and means. Doña Carmen had never mentioned money to him in her life, and he had never felt called upon to give her any account of his speculations and business matters. He regarded himself as absolute master of his fortune, and it never entered his head to think that she could make any claims on it. A friend, however, had lately enlightened him on this point. Speaking of Doña Carmen's feeble health, he had very naturally inquired whether she had made her will, and this friend, who was a lawyer, had at the same time mentioned the fact that, by the law of Spain, half of the business and fortune was hers.

This was a terrible shock to Salabert. He was frightened to watch his wife's decline; at her death her relations would

claim half of all he had made, would poke their noses into his concerns, even the most private. Horror!

He consulted his lawyer. The simplest way of remedying the mischief, and depriving these relations of their rights, was to induce his wife to make a will in his favour. To the Duke this seemed the most natural thing in the world, and in the interview he proposed, he intended to suggest it to her as diplomatically as he could, so as not to alarm her as to her own state of health.

So he waited, arranging and looking over his papers, till he thought it was time to send again to inquire whether the priest was gone. But just as he was about to do so, the porter came in and told him that some gentlemen wanted to see him, and among them Calderón. The banker was much annoyed.

"Did you say I was at home?"

"Well, as you always are at home in the morning, Señor Duque——"

"Damn you!" said the banker, with a furious scowl. But raising his voice at once, and putting on the clumsy abruptness which he was so fond of affecting: "Show them in, of course," he said, "show the gentlemen in."

On this Calderón came in, followed by Urreta and two other bankers not less well known in Madrid. They all looked grave, almost sinister. But Salabert, paying no heed to their looks, began shaking hands and slapping backs, making a great noise. "Good business! Very good business, now to lock you all four up, and make you each pay a round sum as ransom! Ha, ha! Why here, in my room, are the four richest rascals in Madrid. Four gorged sharks! How is your rheumatism, Urreta? It strikes me that you want thoroughly overhauling as much as I do. And you, Manuel, how long do you expect to hold out? Your cousin, you see, is looking out very sharp."

The four gentlemen maintained a courteous reserve, and their extreme gravity cut short this impertinent banter. The

case was, in fact, a serious one. About a year ago Salabert had sold them the business of a railway from B—— to S——, which was already in full work, with all the plant and rolling-stock. Though it had not been committed to writing, it was fully understood by both parties that when the extension from S—— to V—— should be put up for sale, as it was in connection with the other line, Salabert should advance no claims, but leave it to them to treat for it. Now, it had come to their knowledge that the Duke had failed to keep his word, and had tried to jockey them in the most barefaced way, by making a bid for the line.

The first to speak was Calderón.

"Antonio," he said, "We have come to quarrel with you very seriously."

"Impossible! Quarrel with such an inoffensive creature as I am?"

"You will remember that when we bought up your railway, you agreed, or to be accurate, you solemnly promised, not to tender for the purchase of the extension from S—— to V——."

"Certainly I remember it, perfectly."

"But we see with surprise that an offer from you——

"An offer from me!" exclaimed the Duke, in the greatest surprise, and opening his prominent eyes very wide. "Who told you that cock-and-bull story?"

"It is not a cock and-bull story. I, myself, saw your signature," said the Marques de Arbiol.

"My signature? Impossible."

"My good friend, I tell you I saw it with my own eyes. 'Antonio Salabert, Duke de Requena,'" replied Arbiol, very gravely.

"It cannot be; it is impossible!" repeated the Duke, walking up and down the room in the most violent excitement. "It must be a forgery."

Arbiol smiled scornfully.

"It bore your seal."

"My seal?" he exclaimed, with ready parry. "Then the

forgery was committed in my own house. You cannot imagine what scoundrels I have about me. I should need a hundred eyes." Foaming with rage, he rang the bell.

"Now we shall see; we will find out whether I have been deceived or no. Send Llera in here," he said to the servant who appeared. "And all the clerks—immediately, this instant!"

Arbiol glanced at his companions, and shrugged his shoulders. But Requena, though he saw this, did not choose to notice it; he went on growling, snorting, uttering the most violent interjections, and walking to and fro. Presently Llera made his appearance, followed by a group of abject-looking clerks, ill-dressed and common. Salabert placed himself in front of them, with his arms crossed, and said vehemently:

"Look here, Llera, I mean to find out who is the scoundrel who presented a tender, in my name, with a forged copy of my signature, for the purchase of the S—— and V—— line of railway. Do you know anything of the matter?"

Llera, after looking him straight in the face, bent his head without replying.

"And you others, do you know anything about it? Heh, do you know anything whatever?"

The clerks in the same way stared at him; then they looked at Llera, and they too bent their heads and stood speechless.

Salabert, with well-feigned fury, eyed them all in turn, and at length addressing his visitors:

"You see," he said; "no one answers. The guilty man, or men, lurk among them; for I suspect that more than one must be concerned. Do not be afraid, I will give them a lesson, a terrible lesson. I will not rest till I have them before the judge. Go," he added, to the delinquents, "and those of you who are guilty may well quake. Justice will soon overtake you."

To judge by the absolute indifference with which this fulmination was received, the criminals must have been hardened indeed. Each man went back to his place and his work as though the sword of Nemesis were not drawn to cut his throat.

The bankers were half amused and half angry. At last one of the quartette, biting his lips for fear of laughing outright, held out his hand with a contemptuous gesture, saying:

"Good-bye, Salabert—*au revoir*."

The others followed his example without another word about the business which had brought them. The Duke was not at all disconcerted; he politely saw them to the head of the stairs, firing wrathful lightnings at his clerks as he led his visitors through the office. On his return he took not the slightest notice of the men; he walked down the room like an actor crossing behind the scenes as he comes off the stage.

Soon after this performance he went downstairs himself, to go to his wife's room. He found her alone, reading a book of devotions. Doña Carmen, who had always been pious, had of late given herself up almost exclusively to religious exercises. Her failing strength cut her off more and more from the outer world, and left her sadly submissive to the priests who visited her. Salabert had never opposed this taste for devotion; he regarded it with pitying indifference, as an innocent mania. However, just lately, some rather large bounties of Doña Carmen's had alarmed him, and he had felt obliged to give her a paternal lecture. He was accustomed to find her submissive, unambitious, absolutely indifferent to the result of his various speculations; he treated her as a child, if not as a faithful dog, whose head he might now and then pat kindly. The hapless woman never had interfered in his life, his toil, or his vices. Though his mistresses and fearful extravagance were discussed by all the rest of the world, Doña Carmen knew nothing of them, or ignored them. Nevertheless, the Duke's last connection with Amparo had distressed her more than any former one. This arrogant but low creature delighted in annoying the Duchess in every possible way, which was what none of her predecessors had done. If she went out driving with her husband, Amparo would keep pace in her carriage and exchange significant glances with Requena. When the good lady gently complained of such conduct, Salabert would simply deny, not merely his

smiles and ogling, but all acquaintance with the woman: he only knew her by sight, he had never spoken to her in his life. It was the same at the Opera; Amparo would stare all the evening at the Duke's box. At bull-fights and at races she made a display of reckless luxury which attracted general attention. Certain well-intentioned friends, in their compassion for Doña Carmen, kept her informed as to the enormous sums this woman was costing the Duke by her extravagance and caprices. These constant vexations, endured unconfessed to any one but her director, had told on the lady's health, reducing her to a state of weakness which made it seem a miracle that she was still alive. Salabert had something else to do than to consider her sufferings. He thought that with the title of Duchess, and such enormous wealth, in so splendid a house, Doña Carmen ought to be the happiest woman on earth.

"Well, how are you, old woman, how are you?" said he as he went in, in a half rough and half kindly tone which betrayed his entire indifference.

Doña Carmen looked up with a smile.

"What, you? What miracle brings you here at this hour?"

"I should have come earlier, but I was told that Father Ortega was with you. How did you sleep? Pretty well? That's right. You are not so ill as you fancy. Why do you let the priests come hanging about you as if you were at the point of death?"

"Do you suppose a priest is of no use but when one is dying?"

"Of course priests about a house are indispensable to make it look respectable," he answered, stretching himself in an easy chair, and spreading out his legs. "Without a rag of black fustian, a newly furnished palace like this is too gaudy. Still, in the long run, they become a nuisance; they are never tired of begging; they have a swallow like a whale's. I should like to buy sham ones made of wax or papier-maché, they would answer every purpose."

"There, there, Antonio. Do not talk so wildly. Any one

who heard you would take you for a heretic, and that you are not, thank God!"

"What should I gain by being a heretic? That does not pay." Then suddenly changing the subject, he said: "How is that caravansary of yours in the Cuatro Caminos getting on?"

He meant the asylum of which Doña Carmen was the chief benefactress.

"It is doing very well, excepting that the Marquesa de Alcudia wishes to retire, and we do not know whom to appoint as treasurer in her place."

"It is always empty on the Sabbath, I suppose?"

"Why?" said the lady, innocently.

"They are all off to Seville on broomsticks, no doubt."

"Bah! do not make game of the poor old things," said she, laughing. "You and I are old folks, too."

"Very true, very true," replied the banker, affecting serious melancholy. "We are a pair of old puppets, and one fine day, when we least expect it, we shall find ourselves removed to other quarters."

He had discovered an opening for the subject he wished to discuss, and had seized on it at once.

"No," said his wife, "you are strong and hearty enough. You will live to fight many a battle yet; but I, my dear, have but one foot in the stirrup."

"Nay, nay, we are both in the same plight. Once over the sixties there is no knowing."

"If such reflections did anything to bring you nearer God, and make you labour in His service, I should be glad indeed."

"Do you think I do nothing in His service, when I spend above five thousand dollars in masses every year?"

"Come, Antonio, do not talk like that."

"My dear child, it is a very good thing to think of the next world, but it is prudent, to say the least, to think of this world too I have just lately been considering that if you or I

were to die, there would be no end of complications for the survivor."

"Why?"

"Because husband and wife are not by law nearest of kin to each other, and if by chance either of us died intestate, our relations would be a perfect torment to the survivor."

"For that there is an easy remedy. We make our wills and it is settled."

"That is just what I have been thinking," said Salabert, endeavouring to make a show of calm indifference, which he was far from feeling. "It struck me that instead of our each making an independent will, we might come to a mutual arrangement."

"What is that?"

"A will by which each is the heir to the other."

Doña Carmen looked down at the book she still held, and did not immediately answer. The Duke, somewhat uneasy, watched her narrowly from under his eyelids, gnawing his cigar with impatience.

"That is impossible," said she at last, very gravely.

"What is impossible? And why?" he hastily asked, sitting upright in his chair.

"Because I intend to leave all I have, whether much or little, to your daughter. I have promised her that I will."

Salabert had never dreamed of stumbling on such an obstacle, he had thought of the mutual bequest as a settled thing. He was equally startled and vexed, but he immediately recovered himself, and assuming a serious and dignified manner, he spoke:

"Very good, Carmen. I have no wish to coerce you in the matter. You are mistress of your possessions, and can leave them to whom you choose, though you must remember that that fortune has been earned by me at the cost of much toil. During the years of our married life, pecuniary questions have never given rise to any differences between us, and I sincerely wish that they never may. Money, as compared with the

feelings of the heart, is of no importance whatever. The thing that pains me is the thought that any other person, even though it be my own daughter, should have usurped my place in your affections."

At these words his voice broke a little.

"No, Antonio, no," Doña Carmen hastened to put in. "Neither your daughter nor any one else can rob you of the affection due to you. But you are rich enough without needing my fortune, and she wants it."

"No. It is vain to try to soften the blow, I feel it in the depths of my heart," replied Salabert in pathetic accents, and pressing one hand to his left side. "Five-and-thirty years of married life, five-and-thirty years of joys and griefs, of fears and hopes in common, have not availed to secure me the foremost place in you affections. Nothing that can be said will remedy that. I fancied that our union, the years of love and happiness that we have spent together, might be closed by an act which would crown our lives by making one of us inherit the whole of what we have gained. The devotion of a husband and wife is never better displayed than in a last will and testament."

Requena's oratory had risen to a tone of moral dignity which, for a moment, seemed to impress his wife. However, she replied with perfect sweetness but unshaken firmness:

"Though Clementina is not my own flesh and blood, I love her as if she were. I have always regarded her as my own child, and it seems to me an act of injustice to deprive a child of its share of an inheritance."

"But, my dear," exclaimed the Duke vehemently, "for whom do you suppose I want it but for my daughter? Make me your heir, and I pledge myself to transmit it to her, not only undiminished but greatly augmented."

Doña Carmen kept silence, but shook her head in negation. Her husband rose as though emotion were quite too much for him.

"Oh, yes! I understand! You cannot forgive me some

little errors of caprice and folly. You are taking advantage of this opportunity of revenge. Very well, very well. Indulge your vengeance; but believe me when I say that I have never loved any wom an better than you. The heart cannot be made to obey orders, Carmen; if I desired to tear your image out of mine, my heart would answer: 'No, I cannot give it up without breaking.' It is sad, very sad, to meet with so cruel a disenchantment at the end of our lives. If you were to die to-morrow, which God forbid! what worries and troubles must await me, besides the grief of losing the wife I adore. Why I, a poor old man, might be compelled to quit the house where I have lived so many years, which I built and beautified in the hope of dying under its roof in your arms!"

Requena's voice broke at judicious intervals, and his eyes filled with tears. When he ceased speaking he sank into his armchair as though quite crushed, pressing his handkerchief to his eyes.

But Doña Carmen, though tender-hearted and sensitive, showed no signs of emotion. On the contrary, she replied in a steady voice:

"You know perfectly well that there is no truth in all that. I am not capable of taking any revenge, nor, if I were, could there be any such vengeance in leaving all I can to your daughter, who is mine solely by the affection I bear to her."

The Duke changed his tactics. He looked at his wife compassionately for a few minutes, and then he said:

"The greatest happiness you could confer on Clementina to show your affection would be to get out of her way as soon as you can. Poor Osorio is up to the ears in hot water. Now I understand why his creditors have been so long-suffering. You no doubt have said something to his wife of this will of yours, and as you are somewhat ailing they are looking for your death like showers in May. Make no mistake about that."

Doña Carmen at these cruel words turned even paler than

she always was. She clutched the arms of her chair with an effort to keep herself from fainting. This that her husband had said was horrible, but only too probable. He saw her agitation, and at once brought forward facts to confirm his hypothesis. He drew a complete picture of Osorio's position, pointing out how unlikely it was that his creditors should still give him time if they had not some definite hope to count on; and this could only be her own death.

The unhappy woman at last spoke. Her words were almost sublime:

"If, indeed, Clementina desires my death," she said, "then so do I, with all my heart. Everything I can leave is for her."

Salabert left the room in a towering rage, fighting like a bull assailed by crackers, or an actor who has been hissed off the stage.

Doña Carmen lay for some time motionless in the attitude in which he had left her, her eyes fixed on vacancy. At last two tears dropped from her eyes and slowly trickled down her cheeks.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DUKE'S BALL.

WEEKS and months went by. Clementina spent the summer at Biarritz as usual. Raimundo followed her, leaving his sister in charge of some relations, and only returned at the end of September. A storm had swept over the orphan's dwelling which had completely wrecked its happiness. Raimundo, entirely neglecting his methodical habits of study, had rushed into the world of pleasure with the ardour of a novice. His sister, amazed at such a change, remonstrated mildly but without effect. The young man behaved with the petulance of a spoilt child, answering her sharply, or if she spoke with sterner decision, melting into tears, declaring that he was miserable, that she did not love him, that it would have been better if he had died when his mother died, and so forth. Aurelia saw that there was nothing for it but to suffer in silence, and kept her fears and gloomy anticipations to herself. She could too easily guess the cause of this change, but neither of them ever made any allusion to it; Raimundo because he could not speak to his sister of his connection with Clementina, and she because she could not bear that he should suppose she even understood it.

Meanwhile it led our young friend to great extravagance, far beyond what his income allowed. To enable him to keep up with the lady's carriage as she drove in the fashionable avenues, he bought a fine horse, after taking some riding lessons. Theatres, flowers and gifts for his mistress, amusements shared with his new friends of the Savage Club, dress, trinkets,

everything, in short, which a youth "about town" thinks indispensable, cost him enormous sums in proportion to his income. He was forced to touch his capital. This, as we know, was in the form of shares in a powder manufactory, and in the funds. His mother had kept her securities in an iron box inside her wardrobe. When she died, the guardian she had appointed to her two children, examined the documents and made due note of them, but as Raimundo was esteemed a very steady young fellow of impeccable conduct, and as he had for some time past presented and cashed the coupons, his uncle did not take the securities out of his keeping, but left them in the box where he had found them. And now Raimundo, needing money at any cost, and not daring to borrow it of any one, broke his trust, for he was not yet of legal age, and sold some of the securities. And the strange thing is, that although he had hitherto lived so blamelessly, upright in thought and honest in purpose, he did it without feeling any very deep remorse. His passion had so completely stultified and altered him.

Of course he did not do this without its leading to worse consequences. His uncle, hearing of his extravagant expenditure, came to the house one day, shut himself up with him in his study and attacked him point-blank:

"We must settle accounts together, Raimundo. From what I am told, and from what I can see, you are living at a rate which you cannot possibly afford. This is a serious matter, and, as your trustee, I must know where the money comes from, if not for your own sake, at any rate for your sister's."

Raimundo was greatly startled. He turned pale and muttered some unintelligible words. Then finding himself at bay, at once perceiving that his safety depended on this interview—that is to say, the safety of his love affair—he did not hesitate to lie boldly.

"Yes, uncle, it is true that I am spending a good deal, more than my income would permit, no doubt. But you need

not therefore conclude that it is the capital I inherited from my parents."

"Well, then?"

"Well, then," said the young man, and his voice dropped as if he had some difficulty in speaking, "I cannot tell you whence I get the money, uncle, it is a matter of honour."

His guardian was mystified.

"Of honour! I do not know what that may mean. But listen to me, boy; I cannot let the matter drop. My position is critical. If I do not take proper care of your interests I may find myself called upon to pay up, and there is no mercy for trustees."

Raimundo remained silent for some seconds, at last, stammering and hesitating, he said:

"If you must know then I will tell you. You have heard perhaps of my intimacy with a lady?"

"Yes, I have heard something of a flirtation between you and Osorio's wife."

"Well, that explains the mystery," said the nephew, colouring violently.

"So that, in point of fact, this woman"——said the elder, snapping his thumb and finger.

Raimundo bent his head and said no more, or, to be exact, his silence said everything. The man who had indignantly refused his mistress's bank-notes now confessed himself guilty of this humiliation, though perfectly innocent, simply out of fear.

His uncle was a vulgar mortal enough, who kept a shop in the Calle de Carmen. His nephew's confession, far from rousing his indignation, raised the youth in his esteem.

"Well, my dear fellow! I am glad to see that you have hatched out at last and are beginning to know the ways of the world. Ah, you rogue, how quiet you have kept it!"

But as he still remained in the study, betraying the remains of a suspicion, Raimundo, with the audacity peculiar to women and weak men in critical circumstances, said firmly enough:

"My capital and my sister's are intact; I can show you the securities this very minute."

He took out the key and was going to fetch the box. His uncle stopped him.

"No need, my boy, no need. What for?"

And thus he escaped as by a miracle from this dreadful predicament, which might so easily have ended in a catastrophe. At the same time, his triumph cost him many moments of bitter reflection, and a collapse of mind and body which made him quite ill for a time. It is impossible to break suddenly with all the traditions and ideas which constitute the backbone of our character without the acutest pain.

At about this time a gentleman from Chili came to call on him; a naturalist himself, and, like Raimundo, devoted to the study of butterflies. He had last come from Germany, and was on his way home to America; he had read some of the young man's scientific papers, and having also heard of his fine collection, he would not pass through Madrid without visiting it. Raimundo received him with great pleasure, and some little shame; for some months he had scarcely thought of scientific subjects, and had neglected his specimens. The South American nevertheless found it extremely interesting and was full of intelligent sympathy; he told him that he was commissioned by his Government to recruit some young men of talent to fill the professors' chairs lately created at Santiago in Chili. If Alcázar would emigrate one of them was open to him.

In any other circumstances Raimundo, who had no tie of blood excepting his sister, would certainly have decided on this step. But as it was, enmeshed by the toils of love, the proposal struck him as so absurd that he could but smile with a trace of contempt, and he politely declined it as though he were a millionaire, or a man at the head of Spanish society.

Then to pay for his journey to Biarritz, he was again obliged to sell some shares in the funds. He carried five thousand francs with him, a more than ample sum for his summer in France.

But at the end of a few days, led away by the example of his friends, he took to betting at the Casino, on the game of racing with dice, and in two evenings he had lost everything. Not being accustomed to these proceedings, the only thing he could think of to help himself was to return to Madrid at once, sell some more shares, and come back again. His fortune was dwindling from day to day. By the beginning of the winter he had sacrificed several thousand dollars; but this did not check his lavish expenditure. Aurelia, who from some hints of her uncle, or suspicions of her own, imagined that she knew from whom the money came, was melancholy and distressed. Her eyes, as she looked at her brother, were full of grief and pity, not unmingled with indignation.

So matters went on till the Carnival. The Duchess of Requena's health had been improved by some waters in Germany, to which her husband had taken her in the autumn No sooner had she made her will in favour of her step-daughter, than he devoted himself to taking care of her, knowing how important her existence was to him. The great speculator's affairs meanwhile were progressing satisfactorily. He had bought the mines at Riosa, as he had proposed, money down. From that moment he had been waging covert war against the rest of the company, selling shares at lower and lower prices, to depreciate their value. This had worked entirely to his satisfaction. In a few months the price had fallen from a hundred and twenty, at which they had stood just after the sale of the property, to eighty-three. Salabert waited on from day to day to produce a panic, by throwing a large number of them into the market, and so bring the quotation down to forty. Then, by means of his agents in Madrid, Paris, and London, he meant to buy up half the shares, *plus* one, and so to be master of the whole concern.

It was at this time that, in order to serve his political ends, as well as to gratify his native taste for display—in spite of his counter-balancing avarice—he determined to give a fancy dress ball, in his magnificent residence, inviting all the aristocracy,

and securing the presence of the royal family. Preparations were begun two months beforehand. Although the palace was splendidly fitted up, he had some rather heavy and over-large pieces of furniture removed from the drawing-rooms, and replaced by others from Paris, of lighter and simpler style. He got rid of some of the hangings, and purchased several decorative works of art, which it must be owned were certainly lacking. Three weeks before the day fixed for the ball he sent out the invitations. Three weeks, he thought, were not too much to allow his guests to prepare their costumes. Fancy dress was indispensable; gentlemen to wear dominoes at the very least. The newspapers had soon announced the ball to every town in Spain.

As her stepmother took little interest in such things, and from her delicate health was not able to play an active part in the preparations, Clementina was the life and soul of the whole affair. She spent all her days in her father's house, save only a few hours which she bestowed on Raimundo. Osorio at this juncture took it into his head to have their two little girls home from school, one ten and the other eleven years old, to spend a few days with their parents; but the poor little things had to return some days sooner than their father had promised, because Clementina was so busy that she scarcely found time to speak to them. This made their father so angry that, one day, without allowing them to take leave of their mother, he put them into the carriage, and himself accompanied them back to school. That evening, however, when Clementina returned home, there was a violent quarrel between them on the subject.

Raimundo, too, found himself neglected; still he looked forward with childish delight to this entertainment, at which he meant to appear as a court page. This was an idea suggested by Clementina. The model for his dress was taken from a famous picture in the Senate-house. For herself, she had fallen in love with a portrait of Margaret of Austria, the queen of Philip III., painted by Pantoja. She ordered a black velvet dress, very closely fitting, with pink silk slashings braided with

silver; and there can be no doubt that it was a costume singularly well adapted to set off her fine and ample figure and the imposing beauty of her face.

The Duke himself worked hard at the less ornamental details; the erection, for instance, of a gallery for the musicians, which was to be built up against the wall, between the two large drawing-rooms, and embowered in shrubs and flowering plants; the arrangements for hats and wraps, the laying of carpets, the removal of furniture, and so forth. Salabert was a terribly hard overseer, a real driver of the workmen. He never allowed them to rest, and expected them to be incessantly on the alert. He never gave them a moment's peace, nor was satisfied with what they did.

One day a cabinet of carved ebony had to be moved, from a room where the ladies were to sit to the card-room. The workmen, under the direction of the master carpenter, were carrying it slung, while the Duke followed, bidding them be careful, with an accompaniment of objurgations.

"Damn it all, be quick. Move a little quicker, can't you, you snub-nosed cur! Now, mind that chandelier!—lower Pepe, lower—lower, I say, you ass! Damn it, now raise it again."

As they went through the door, the head carpenter, seeing that they might easily hurt themselves, called out: "Mind your fingers!"

"Mind the mouldings! Curse your fingers," exclaimed the Duke. "Do you think I care for your fingers, you louts?"

And one of the men looked him in the face with an indescribable expression of hatred and scorn.

When the cabinet was in its place the Duke saw it fixed, and then went to his room to brush off the dust. Soon after, he went down the grand staircase, and getting into his carriage went out.

At last the great day arrived. The newspapers announced the ball for the last time with a grand flourish of trumpets. The Duke de Requena had spent a million of francs in preparations, they said, and they also gave it to be understood

that all the flowers had been sent from Paris. And this was true. The Duke, born in Valencia, the loveliest garden of Europe, ordered flowers from France for his ball to the amount of some thousands of dollars. Camellias strewed the very floors in the ante-room and passages; hundreds of exotic plants decorated the hall, the corridors, and the rooms. An army of servants, in knee-breeches and a gaudy livery, stood at every corner where they might be wanted. A detachment of horse-guards was posted at the garden entrance to keep order among the carriages, with the help of the police. The cloak-room, erected for the occasion, was a luxurious apartment, where every arrangement had been made to preserve the ladies' magnificent wraps, or *sorties de bal*, as it is the fashion to call them, from being lost or damaged.

The grand staircase was a blaze of electric light, the hall and dining-room were lighted with gas: the dancing-room with wax candles. The sitting-rooms and card-room had oil-lamps with wide and elaborate shades, and in these rooms fires were blazing cheerfully.

Clementina received the company in the first drawing-room, close to the ante-room. She took her stepmother's place here because Doña Carmen had not sufficient strength to stand for so long. The Duchess sat in the inner room, surrounded by friends. The Duke and Osorio, at the door between the hall and ante-room, offered an arm to the ladies as they arrived and conducted them to Clementina.

This lady's costume set off her beauty, as she had intended, to the greatest advantage. Her exquisite figure seemed even more finely moulded in this close fitting dress, and her head, with its magnificent coppery hair, rose above the black velvet like a queenly flower. King Phillip III. would gladly have exchanged the real Margaret for such a counterfeit. A rumour was current in the rooms, and made public next day in the papers, that a hairdresser had come from Paris by the express train to dress her head.

The motley crowd soon began to fill the rooms. Every

epoch of history, every country of the world had sent representatives to Salabert's ball. Moors, Jews, Chinese, Venetians, Greeks and Romans—Louis XIV. and the Empire, Queens and slaves, nymphs and gipsies, Amazons and Sibyls, grisettes and vestals, walked arm-in-arm, or stood chatting in groups, and laughing with cavaliers of the last century, Flemings of the fourteenth, pages and necromancers. Most of the men, however, had adopted the Venetian doublet and short cloak. The orchestra had already played two or three waltzes, but as yet no one was dancing. They awaited the arrival of the Royal personages.

Raimundo was wandering about the rooms with the familiarity of an intimate friend, smiling at every one with the modest frankness which made him singularly attractive, though strange to a society where cold, not to say scornful, manners are regarded as the stamp of dignity and rank. The young entomologist had been for some time living in a delicious whirl, a sort of golden dream, such as humble natures are often addicted to. His page's costume, of the date of Isabella the Great, suited him well, and more than one pretty girl turned her head to look at him. Now and then he made his way to where Clementina was on duty, and without speaking they could exchange looks and smiles. On one of these occasions he saw Pepe Castro, in the dress of a cavalier of the Court of Charles I., approach to pay his respects.

"How is this?" he said in her ear. "Are you not yet tired of your cherub?"

"I am never tired of what is good," said she with a smile.

"Thank you," he replied, sarcastically.

"There is nothing to thank me for; are you trying to pick a quarrel?" And she turned away with a shrug of contempt to speak to the Condesa de Cotorraso, who came in at the moment.

Raimundo had watched this brief colloquy. Its confidential tone was a stab to him. For a moment he did not move; Esperancita passed close in front of him, but he did not see

her. It was the child's first appearance at a ball. She wore a pretty Venetian dress of a rich red colour, cut low; her mother was magnificent as a Dutch burgomaster's wife, in brown, embroidered with gold and silver, with a lace ruff and necklace of diamonds and pearls. What pangs these costumes must have cost her luckless husband! In the first instance, when this ball was under discussion, he had supposed that some combination of old clothes would answer their purpose, and had made no difficulties. When he saw the dresses and the dressmaker's bill he was breathless. He was ready to cry Thief! Woe befall that miserable Salabert and the hour in which he had thought of this ball, and all the Venetian and Dutch ladies that had ever lived! And what most weighed on his soul was the reflection that these costly garments were to be worn for but one night. Four thousand pesetas thrown into the gutter! as he repeated a hundred times a day.

Esperancita looked at Alcázar, expecting him to bow; but seeing that he was gazing elsewhere, she, too, looked round at the group about Clementina, and immediately understood the situation. A cloud of distress came over her, as over Raimundo. But suddenly her eyes sparkled, and her whole ingenuous and insignificant little face was lighted up, transfigured by an indefinable charm. Pepe Castro was coming towards her.

"Charming, charming!" murmured the Adonis in an absent way, as he bowed affectedly.

The girl blushed with delight.

"Will you honour me with the first waltz?"

At this very moment she found herself the centre of a group of young men, all buzzing round Calderón's money-bags, and eager to compliment his daughter. Among these was Cobo Ramirez. They were all pressing her to give them a dance, each in turn signing the initials of his illustrious name on Esperancita's card. Ramoncito, who was standing a few yards off, did not join the little crowd—faithful to the advice given him, now above a year ago, by his friend and adviser Castro;

though hitherto these tactics had proved unavailing, for Esperancita remained insensible to his devotion. Still, he would not ascribe this to any fault in the method, but to his lack of courage to follow it out with sufficient vigour, without hesitancy or backsliding. If the girl happened to look kindly at him, or speak to him more gently than usual, farewell diplomacy!

At this moment he was casting grim looks at the crowd which had gathered round her, and vaguely replying to Cotorraso, who had of late taken a most oppressive fancy to him, button-holing him wherever he met him, to explain his new methods of extracting oil. The young deputy had not gained in dignity from his showy dress and white wig, as a gentleman of the eighteenth century: he looked for all the world like a footman.

Suddenly there was a stir in the ante-room. The Royal party had arrived. The company collected about the doorways. The Duke and Duchess, Clementina and Osorio, went to the outside steps to receive them, and the music played the Royal March. The King and Queen came in, walking slowly between the two ranks of guests, stopping now and then when they saw any one known to them to bestow a gracious greeting. The recipient of such honour bowed or curtsied to the ground, kissing the Royal hand with grateful effusiveness. The ladies especially humbled themselves with a rapture they could not conceal, and a gush of loyalty and affection which brought the blood to their cheeks.

The royal quadrille was immediately formed, and Clementina left her place by the door to dance in it. The Sovereign led out the Duchess, who made this great effort to please her husband. A triple row of spectators stood round to look on.

Salabert was in his glory. The waif, the beggar, from the market-place of Valencia, was entertaining Royalty. His dull, fish like, dissipated eyes glistened with triumph. This explosion of vanity had blown to the winds all the sordid anxieties which the cost of the ball had caused him—the deadly struggle with his own avarice. To-morrow perhaps the scat-

ered fragments might reunite to give him fresh torment ; for the moment, intoxicated with pride, he was drinking deep breaths of the atmosphere of importance and power created by his wealth; his face was flushed with a congestion of ecstatic vanity.

"Only look at Salabert's radiant expression," said Rafael Alcantara to Leon Guzman and some other intimates who were standing in a group. "Joy transpires from every pore! Now is the moment to ask him for a loan of ten thousand dollars."

"Do you think you would get it?"

"Yes, at six per cent., on good security," said the other. "But look, look! Here comes Lola, the most fascinating and delightful creature who has yet entered these rooms." And he raised his voice so as to be heard by the lady in question.

Lola sent him a smile of acknowledgment; and her husband, the Mexican of the cows, who also had heard the remark, bowed with pleasure. She was really very bewitchingly dressed, as a Louis XIV. Marquise, in rose colour, embroidered with gold, and a yellow train, also embroidered. Her hair was powdered, and round her throat was a black velvet ribbon with silver pendants.

When the Royal quadrille was ended, waltzing began. Pepe Castro came to find Esperancita, who was walking with the youngest of the Alcudia girls. It was the first time that they had either of them been present at a ball, and they were perfectly happy as they looked out on the world in its most holiday aspect, confiding their delightful impressions to each other's private ear. He remained with them for a minute till a partner came to claim Paz for the dance, and the two couples floated off at the same time on the tide of waltzers. For Esperancita the world had vanished. A delicious sense of joy and freedom, like thatwhich a bird might feel in flying if it had a soul, glowed in her heart and lapped her in delight. It was the first time she had ever felt Pepe Castro's arm round her waist. Swept away by him into the maëlstrom of couples, she felt as though they were alone—he and she And the music

charmed her ears and heart, giving sweet utterance to the ineffable gladness which throbbed in every pulse.

When they paused a moment to rest, her face so unmistakeably expressed the supreme emotion of first love, that her aunt Clementina, happening to pass on the arm of the President of Congress, could not help looking at her with a half kindly, half mocking smile, which made the child blush. Pepe Castro could scarcely get a word out of her. Delicious excitement seemed to have stricken her dumb. The happiness which filled her soul found an outlet, as so often happens, in a feeling of general benevolence. The ball to her was a pure delight; all the men were amusing; all the women were exquisitely dressed. Even Ramon, who came by, was bedewed with some drops of this overflowing tide of gladness.

"Are you not dancing, Ramon?" she inquired, with so inviting a smile that the poor fellow was quite overcome with joy.

"I have been kept talking by Cotorraso."

"But find yourself a partner. Look, there is Rosa Pallarés, who is not dancing."

The smiling statesman hastened to invite the damsel in question, thinking, with characteristic acumen, that Esperancita had selected her for her plain face. Soothed by this flattering reflection he was quite content to dance with the daughter of General Pallarés, of whom Cobo Ramirez was wont to speak as "one of our handsomest scarecrows." He felt as though he were doing his lady's bidding, and giving her indisputable proof that her jealousy—if she were jealous—was unfounded.

When the waltz was over, he returned to her, as a mediæval knight from the tournay, to receive his guerdon at his mistress's hands. But, inasmuch as there is no perfect happiness for any one in this world, at the same moment Cobo Ramirez went up to Esperancita. They both sat down by her and plied her with compliments and attentions. One took charge of her fan, the other of her handkerchief; both tried to entertain her by their remarks, and to flatter her vanity by their assiduity. It must

in truth be owned that if Ramon was the more earnest and solid talker, Cobo was by far the more amusing. And yet Esperancita, against her wont, by one of those unaccountable whims of a young girl, was for once inclined to listen kindly to Ramoncito. The trio afforded a diverting subject for contemplation.

The servants moved about the rooms with trays of lemonade, ices, and bonbons. Ramon called one of them to offer Esperancita a particular kind of jelly which he knew she liked. At the same time he insisted on his rival taking an ice. Cobo declined. Ramon pressed him so eagerly that Alcantara and some other men who were standing near could not help noticing it.

"Look at Ramon trying to make Cobo eat an ice," said one.

"He sees he is hot, and wants to be the death of him! Nothing can be plainer," said Leon.

Pepe Castro, as soon as he saw his partner safe in the hands of Ramirez and Maldonado, had stolen away. As he wandered on he met Clementina. She seemed to be in every place at once, returning every few minutes to attend their Majesties, who had retired to a private room with the Duchess and Requena, and the ladies and gentlemen of their suite.

"I saw you dancing with my little niece," said the lady. "Why do you not make up to her?"

"To what end?"

"To marry her."

"Horror! Why, my dear, what have I done to you that you should wish me so dreadful a fate?"

"Come, come, listen to reason," said she, quite gravely, and assuming a maternal air. "Esperancita is no beauty, but she is not disagreeable looking. She is fresh and youthful, and is desperately in love with you, that I know."

"As you are," interrupted the other, with some bitterness:

"As I am—but then she has not known you some sixteen years. Yes, she loves you, I assure you, very truly. We

women can see such things with half a glance. Marry her; do not be foolish. Calderón is very rich."

Before Castro could reply, she was gone. He stood there a few minutes lost in thought; then he moved away slowly, making his way round the rooms with a lazy strut, stopping to stare, with consummate impertinence, at all the pretty women, like a Pasha in a slave-market.

Lola had taken possession of Raimundo, and kept him at her side in one corner of the sitting-room, where she laid herself out to conquer him by every art of the coquette. This was the pretty brunette's favourite amusement. No friend of hers could have a man in her train, without Lola's endeavouring to snatch him from her. Handsome or ugly, forward or shy, it mattered not; all she cared for was to gratify her incurable craving for admiration, and her desire to triumph over every other woman. Her eyes had a look of sweetness and innocence which deceived every one; it was impossible to believe that behind those guileless orbs there lurked a will as determined as it was astute. Alcázar thought her very pretty, and most agreeable to talk to; but the fact of her being Clementina's friend, and of her talking of scarcely anything else, had a great deal to do with this impression. As he could neither dance nor converse with the lady of his adoration, both for reasons of prudence and because she was too much occupied with other duties, he consoled himself by hearing Lola chatter about the details of her life. Every trifle interested the youth; the dress she had worn at the French Ambassador's ball, the incidents of a shooting-party at the Cotorrasos', the scenes she had with her husband, &c. Lola's tactics were first to gain his attention and captivate his sympathy, and then to win his liking.

When Clementina came into the room, they were deep in conversation. She stood for an instant in the doorway, looking at them with surprise and vexation. For some time past Lola had been out of her good graces. Though Pepe Castro had ceased to interest her, when her friend had attempted to win

him from her, the proceeding had led to a certain coolness between them. Now she perceived that Lola had cast her eyes on Raimundo, and was flirting with him on every possible occasion. This roused an impulse of hatred, which she had some difficulty in dissembling. She gave them a fiercely indignant stare, and going into the middle of the room, she said in a somewhat excited way:

"Alcázar, you are wanted to dance. Are you too tired?"

"Oh, no!" the young man hastened to reply, and he rose at once. "With whom shall I dance?"

Clementina made no answer. Lola had a satirical smile which exasperated her. She turned to leave the room.

"I am sorry to have disturbed you," she said coldly, as they went away together.

Raimundo looked at her in surprise. This tone was quite new to him.

"Disturbed me? Not at all."

"Yes, indeed; for you seemed to be enjoying yourself very much with your companion," and then, unable to repress her temper any longer, she added in a brusque tone:

"Come with me."

She led him to the dining-room, where the supper tables were laid awaiting the guests. There, in the bay of a window, she poured out her wrath. She loaded him with abuse, and announced definitely that all was at an end between them. She even went so far as to shake him violently by the arm. Alcázar was so amazed, so overwhelmed, as to be absolutely incapable of speech. This saved him. Seeing dismay and grief painted on his countenance, Clementina could not fail to perceive that her anger had deceived her. Raimundo, at any rate, had not the faintest notion of flirting. So, calming down a little, she accepted the denial he at last found words to utter.

"But it was solely to talk of you that I sat with her," he said.

"To talk of me? Well, then, for the future, I will trouble

you not to talk about me. It is enough that you should love me and hold your tongue."

The servants who were passing in and out glanced at them with significant grimaces.

As they left the room they met Pepa Frias. The buxom widow was in the best of humours; she had received many compliments. Her dress, a very handsome one, cut immoderately low, was that of a foreign princess of the time of Charles III., in silver brocade with gold embroidery, and a blue velvet train.

"My dear, I am as hungry as a wolf," she exclaimed as she came in. "When are we to have supper? Ho, ho! so you are whispering in corners! Prudence, Clementina, prudence! My dear child, I must positively have something to eat or I shall drop. I can wait no longer."

Clementina laughed and took her into a corner, where she had a plate brought for her with some meat. Alcázar returned to the drawing-room, very happy, but still tremulous from the painful emotion his mistress had caused him. He had never before seen her in such a rage.

Clementina's friendship with Pepa had been closer than ever since the scene in the boudoir. The widow was convinced that the safety of her fortune depended on this intimacy, and did all she could to consolidate it. Thanks to this manœuvre she had, in fact, already recovered possession of a large part of it; nor was she now uneasy about the remainder. She knew that Doña Carmen had made her will in her step-daughter's favour, and though the Duchess had been rather stronger lately, her death ere long was a certainty, for the doctors had pronounced that nothing could save her but an operation, which she was too weak to undergo.

Pepa's cynical assurance was quite to Clementina's mind. They understood each other perfectly. They were a pair of hussies, grisettes born into a sphere of society for which Nature had never intended them. Pepa, of course had a better right there than Clementina, who bore the taint in her blood. Pepa was an adventuress by predilection.

"Look here, Clem," said she as she, devoured a slice of galantine of turkey. "Let that boy drop; he is not worth his salt. You have had enough of him for a mere whim."

"How do you know what he is worth?" replied Clementina laughing.

"By his face, my dear. He has been your acknowledged, lover for above a year, and to this day he turns as red as a poppy whenever you look at him."

"That is exactly what I like him for."

Pepa shrugged her shoulders.

"Indeed? Well, I should find it intolerable."

"And Arbos? How does he behave?"

"Oh, he is a perfect goose, but at any rate he can keep his countenance. If you tell him he is a great man, there is nothing he will not do for you. He has found places for above a score of my connections. Then it is very nice to have some influence in the political world, and see deputies at one's feet. Yesterday, for instance, I had a visit from Manricio Sala, who has set his heart on being made under-secretary. He is quite certain, it would seem, that in that case Urreta would let his daughter marry him."

"Oh, I loathe politics!—Do you know, Irenita is quite sweet in that *chasseresse* costume."

"Hm—too showy."

"Not at all, it is extremely pretty. What has become of her husband? I have not seen him since they came in."

"Her husband! a precious specimen he is!" exclaimed Pepa, looking up in her wrath. "Oh, what troubles come upon me, my dear, what troubles!" she added with her mouth still full.

"Maria Huerta?" asked Clementina in a confidential tone.

"Who else?" muttered the widow as she, gazed at the turkey on her plate. Then suddenly she burst out:

"He is a blackguard, a shameless scoundrel, who cannot even keep up appearances for his wife's sake. He spends

chief part of the day waiting for her at the door of the church of San Pascual, and walks home with her. And at the theatre he never takes his eyes off her. It is a shame. He might have some decency. And my idiot of a daughter is madly in love with him, a perfect fool about him, all the while. She does nothing but cry, and show how jealous she is! Why, what does the wretch want but to humiliate her? If I were in her place I would talk to him! And I would give him such a box on the ear to finish with as would make him wink!"

The lady's indignation had not interfered with deglutition.

"Heaven reward you, my dear," she said as she rose. "Now let us see if this heart of mine will be quiet for a little while." For Pepa supposed herself to suffer from a heart complaint which only a good meal would relieve.

A few minutes after they had quitted the dining-room Clementina gave the word, and the supper-room was thrown open. The Royal party led the way, attended by their suite and their host and hostesses. Salabert had lavished his crowning efforts on the supper-room. The ceiling was hung with glittering cloth of gold; the brilliant flowers and exotic fruits, the sheen of silver and crystal, under the blaze of gas lights as numerous as the stars of heaven, were dazzling with splendour. The servants stood motionless in a row against the wall, solemn and speechless. In two deep recesses burnt huge fires of logs, in beautiful fire-places of carved oak, which decorated the wall almost to the ceiling. All the food served at the Royal table had been brought from Paris by a little regiment of cooks and scullions. The only exceptions were fish, brought from the coast of Biscay, and a plum pudding, just arrived from London. The meats were for the most part cold, but there was hot clear soup for those who liked it.

The Royalties did not remain many minutes in the supper-room. As soon as they left, the tide of guests rushed in without much ceremony. The sitting-rooms remained silent, abandoned to the servants, who with the precision of soldiers,

replaced the dwindling wax lights by fresh ones, while the noise in the dining-room, of plates and glasses, and voices and laughter, was almost bewildering.

Cobo Ramirez deserted Esperancita for a while, leaving her on his rival's hands, while he found a seat for himself at a little table in a snug corner, to devour a plateful of ham and Hamburg beef. Ramoncito naturally took advantage of this reprieve to show off his own poetical frugality as compared with Cobo's prosaic gluttony, till Esperancita cut the ground from under him by saying very spitefully to her friend Pacita, who sat by her side:

"For my part I like a man to be a great eater.

"So do I," said Paz. "At any rate it shows that he has a good digestion."

"So have I," said Maldonado, crushed and vexed by the hostile tone the young girls had adopted against him. Paz only smiled scornfully.

General Patiño, tired of throwing his heavy shell at Calderón's torpid spouse without producing the smallest sign of capitulation, had raised the siege, to sit down before the Marquesa de Ujo; she had yielded at the first fire, and thrown open every gate to the enemy. At the same time, as a consummate strategist, the General had not lost sight of Mariana, hoping that some happy accident might again lay her open to his batteries. The newspapers had lately mentioned a rumour that he was to be made Minister of War. This dignity would, no doubt, give him greater influence and prestige, whenever he might choose to surprise the stronghold.

The Marquesa de Ujo was dressed à la Turque, and she played her part so well that Alcantara declared he "longed to have a shot at her himself?" Her languor was so great that she could scarcely exert herself to articulate, so that the General was obliged to assist her every minute in the exhausting effort. While her far from perfect teeth nibbled a cake or two—for her digestion did not allow of her eating anything

more solid—she uttered, or, to be exact, she exhaled a series of exclamations over a new French novel.

"What exquisite scenes! What a sweet book! When she says, 'Come in if you choose; you can dishonour my body but not my soul.' And the duel, when she receives the bullet that was to have killed her husband! How beautiful it is!"

Pepe Castro was prancing—forgive the word—round Lola Madariaga. She was relating with a malicious smile the incident which had just occurred when Clementina had found her sitting with Raimundo. She spoke as though she had won the youth from her friend, with a scornful and patronising air which would have been a shock to Clementina's pride if she could have heard it.

"Poor Clem! she is growing old, isn't she? But what a figure she has still. Of course it is all done by tight-lacing, and it must do her a mischief, sooner or later, but as yet—— Her face does not match her figure, above all now that she has begun to lose her complexion so dreadfully. She always had a very hard face."

And all the time her insinuating soft eyes were fixed on Castro with such inviting looks, as were really quite embarrassing. She had always been told, and it was true, that she had a most innocent face, and to make the most of it she assumed the expression of an idiot.

Castro agreed to all she said, as much to flatter her as out of any ill-feeling towards Clementina. When Clementina cast him off he had consoled himself by paying attentions to Lola, in whom he really felt no interest, though at the same time he had been careful not to let the world know that he was discarded.

"And do you believe that she is really in love with that school-boy?"

"Who can tell! Clementina likes to be thought original. This last whim is just like her. And look at that baby's sentimental gaze at her from afar."

Raimundo, who was standing at the end of one of the tables,

never took his eyes off his mistress while she moved to and fro, attending to the requirements of those guests whom she most desired to please. From time to time she bestowed on him a faint smile of recognition, which transported him to the seventh heaven.

Pepa Frias, who, having had her fill, could eat no more, was picking up a fruit here and a bonbon there, while behind her chair stood Calderón, Pinedo, Fuentes, and two or three more, laughing at her and with her. But the widow was not to be caught napping; she could defend herself, parrying and retorting with masterly skill.

"Where do you have the gout, Pepa, did you say?" asked Pinedo.

"In my feet, in my feet, where all your wits are."

"What is the miniature in that brooch? Is it a family portrait?"

"No, Fuentes," said she, as she handed it to him to look at. "It is a mirror."

The painting represented a monkey.

All the others roared with laughter, attracting general attention.

Soon after the dancing had recommenced the Royal party took their leave. The same ceremony was observed as at their arrival; the guests in two ranks on each side of the room, the Royal march played by the orchestra, and the master of the house in attendance to the carriage door.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

Clementina gave a sigh of relief. Walking slowly, with the delightful sense of a difficult task happily accomplished, she made her way through the rooms, smiling right and left, and shedding amiable speeches on every friend she met. This splendid ball, the most magnificent perhaps ever given in Madrid by a private individual, was almost exclusively her work. Her father had provided the money, but the motive power, the taste and planning, had been hers. She received the congratulations which hailed her from all sides with a pleasing intoxication of flattered vanity. Happiness stirred a craving for love, its inseparable associate. She was possessed by a vehement wish to have a brief meeting, *tête-à-tête*, with Raimundo, to speak and hear a few fond words, to exchange a brief caress. She looked round for him among the crowd.

He had been wandering about the rooms all the evening, generally alone. He had looked forward to this ball with puerile anticipations of delirious and unknown pleasures, for he had never been present at any of these high festivals of wealth and fashion. The reality had not come up to his hopes, as must always be the case. All this ostentation, all the scandalous luxury displayed to his eyes, instead of exciting his pride, wounded it deeply. Never had he felt so completely a stranger in the world he had now for some months lived in. His thoughts, with their natural tendency to melancholy, reverted to his modest home, where, by his fault, necessaries would ere long be lacking; to his humble-minded mother, who had

never nesitated to fulfil the most menial tasks; to his innocent sister, who had learned from her to be thrifty and hard-working. Remorse gnawed at his heart. Then, too, he observed that the young men of his acquaintance treated him here with covert hostility. Many of them he had begun to regard as friends; they welcomed him pleasantly, he played cards with them and sometimes joined in their expeditions, but he clearly understood at last that he was no one, nothing to them, but as Clementina's lover; and he could detect, or his exaggerated sensitiveness made him fancy that he detected, in their demeanour to him, a touch of scorn, which humiliated him bitterly. The passionate devotion which Clementina professed for him compensated no doubt for these miseries, and enabled him often to forget them, but this evening his adored mistress, though she did not ignore him, was necessarily out of his range. He endured the phase of feeling which a mystic goes through when, as he expresses it, God has withdrawn His guiding hand—intense weariness and the darkest gloom of spirit. He danced dutiously two or three times, and talked a little to one and another. Tired of it all, at last he withdrew into the quietest corner of one of the rooms, sat down on a sofa and remained sunk in extreme dejection.

Clementina sought him for some few minutes, and was beginning to be out of patience. She went into the card-room, and he started up to meet her with a beaming countenance. All his melancholy had vanished on seeing that she was in search of him.

"If you would like two minutes' chat, come to the Duke's study," she said, in rapid but tender accents. "It is on the right-hand side, at the end of the corridor." She went thither, and Raimundo, to save appearances, lingered for a few moments by one of the tables, watching the game.

Clementina made her way in and out of the rooms till she reached the corridor, and hurried to the study, a handsome room, so called for mere form, since the Duke always sat upstairs. It was a blaze of light, as all the other rooms were.

As she went in, she fancied she heard a smothered sob, which filled her with surprise and apprehension. Looking about her, she discovered, in a deep recess, a woman lying in a heap on a divan, hiding her face in her handkerchief, and weeping violently. She went up to her, and recognised her by her dress. It was Irenita.

"Irene, my child, what is the matter?" she exclaimed, bending anxiously over her.

"Oh, forgive me, Clementina, I came here, hardly knowing what I was doing. I am so miserable;" and the tears streamed down her face.

"But what has happened then, my poor dear?"

"Nothing, nothing," sobbed the girl. There was a short silence. Clementina looked at her compassionately.

"Come," she said, leaning over her, "It is Emilio. He has done something to vex you this evening."

Irene made no reply.

"Do not break your heart over it, silly child. That will do nothing to mend matters. However great the effort, try to seem indifferent. That is the only way to prevent his despising you. Nay, there is a better way, but I do not advise you to try it; there are things one cannot advise. But still, even if you are in love with him, do not offer him your heart to wring, for God's sake! Never let him know how unhappy he makes you, or you are lost. Let him have his whim out, and he will come back to you."

Irene raised her face, bathed in tears.

"But have you seen—do you know what he has done? It is dreadful."

At this instant Clementina heard a step in the corridor, and suspecting who it might be, she hastily went to look out, saying: "Wait till I shut the door."

She was only just in time; Raimundo arrived at the moment; she put her finger to her lips, and signed to him to go away. Irene saw nothing of it.

When Clementina returned to her side, Irenita poured out,

between sighs and tears, the grievances her husband had heaped upon her that evening. In the first place Emilio had chosen to come to the ball in a Hungarian costume. As soon as she came in, she had perceived that Maria Huerta also wore a Hungarian dress, and this, it must be owned, was a piece of insolence, which more than one person had remarked upon. Then they had danced together twice, and all the while, Emilio had never ceased murmuring in her ear. He had waited on her like a servant the whole evening, offering her ices and fruit with his own hands. Once, as he handed her a plate, their fingers had met. Irenita had seen it with her own eyes. Oh, it was monstrous! Irene only longed to kill herself. She would rather die a thousand deaths than endure such torments.

Clementina comforted her as best she could. Emilio loved her fondly, she was sure; only men liked to show off in this way and prove their powers of fascination. As their hearts were not engaged, there was nothing for it but to let them go for a while, and then they returned to the wife they really loved.

Clementina would not take her to the ladies' cloak-room to have her hair rearranged and to bathe her face; she led her up to the Duchess's dressing-room, and in a few minutes they came down stairs again. Irenita promised not to betray herself. When Clementina reported to Pepa all that had passed, the widow flew into such a fury that she was with difficulty hindered from rushing off to abuse her son-in-law.

"Well, it is all the same," she said, with a shrug. "If I do not scratch his face now, I will do it later. Come what may, I cannot allow that scoundrel to be the death of my daughter; and as for that bare-faced slut, she will not get off till I have spit in her face, and in her husband's ugly phiz, too! A pretty state of things!"

"Would it not be better to get rid of them altogether? Huerta is in office. See if you cannot get him packed off somewhere as Governor?"

"You are right. I will speak of it to Arbos at once; but as to that precious son-in-law of mine, I will pay him out this very night, or my name is not Pepa."

The Duke, surrounded by a group of faithful flatterers, was inhaling clouds of incense, growling out some gross witticism every now and then, which was hailed with applause. The ladies were the most enthusiastic in their admiration. Requena's genius for speculation dazzled them with amazement, as though they would like to calculate how many new dresses his millions would purchase. And he, usually so subservient, he—who, by his own confession, had reached the position he held by dint of kicks behind—lording it here among his worshippers, bullied them without mercy. His coarse jests were flung at men and women alike; he gloried in the brutal exercise of his power. And if these devotees were ready to humble themselves so patiently for nothing—absolutely nothing—what would they not have done if he had given largesse of his millions, if the golden calf had begun to vomit dollars.

In the card-room, whither he went after attending the retirement of their Majesties, a crowd of speculators literally blocked him in.

"How are the Riosa shares looking, Señor Duque?" one made so bold as to ask.

"Do not talk of them," grumbled the man of money, with a furious glare.

Llera's scheme had been punctually carried out. The Duke, after buying up a large number of shares, had set to work to produce a panic among the shareholders. For some months he had been employing secret agents to buy, and sell again immediately at a loss. Thanks to these tactics, the quotations had fallen very low. He was now almost ready for his great coup, buying up all he could get to throw them suddenly into the market, and then securing half the shares, *plus* one.

"Everything cannot turn out well," said the man who had addressed him, not without a smile of satisfaction. "You have always been so lucky."

Her enjoyment, such as it was, was brief. Just as she was moving forward, with a triumphant smile, to make her longed-for progress through the rooms, she found herself face to face with Clementina, who, without the slightest greeting, holding her head very high, laid her hand on her shoulder, saying:

"Have the kindness to listen to me."

Mary Stuart turned pale, hesitated an instant, and then said with resolute arrogance:

"I have nothing to say to you. I came to see the master of the house—the Duke de Requena."

Margaret of Austria fixed a flashing eye on the rival queen, who met it without blinking. Then, bending forward, she said in her ear:

"If you do not come with me this instant I will call two men-servants to turn you out of this house by force."

The Queen of Scots was startled; still she was bold:

"I wish to see the Duke," she said.

"The Duke is not to be seen—by you. Follow me, or I call!" And she looked round as though she were about to act on her threat. The intruder turned very pale, and obeyed.

The scene had, of course, been witnessed by several persons, but no one dared follow the hostile queens. Clementina went straight into the cloak-room.

"This lady's wrap," she said.

Not another word was spoken. A man-servant brought the cloak. Mary Stuart put it on herself unaided, with trembling hands. She went forward a few steps, and then suddenly turning round, she flashed a look of mortal hatred at Margaret of Austria, who returned it with interest in the shape of a contemptuous smile.

It was foreordained of Heaven that the unhappy Queen of Scots should always be a victim—first to her cousin, Elizabeth of England, and now the Queen of Spain had turned her into the street. She found her duenna in the carriage; she had prudently made her escape at the beginning of the scene.

What moral purification Requena's rooms may have gained by the eviction of Mary Stuart it would be hard to say; but they certainly lost much from the æsthetic point of view, for, beyond a doubt, she was lovely.

The ball was coming to an end. Preparations were being made for the final cotillon. The crowd had thinned; several persons went away before the cotillon—elderly folk for the most part, who did not like late hours. Among the young ladies there was the agitation and stir which always precedes this last dance, when the most ceremonious ball assumes an aspect of more intimate enjoyment. Art and fancy now step in to eliminate every sensual element and make the waltz an innocent amusement—a reminiscence of the fancy ballets which, in the fourteenth century, entertained the Courts of France and England. And to many a damsel this is the crowning scene of the first act in the little comedy of love she has begun to perform.

Pepe Castro, as we have seen, had laughed to scorn Clementina's suggestion that he should pay his addresses to Calderón's daughter; but it had not, therefore, fallen on stony ground. Though he talked and danced with other girls, he did not fail to ask her to waltz more than once. When the cotillon was being formed he went to Esperanza and asked her to be his partner, though he knew very well that it would be impossible, as the engagements for the last dance were always made as soon as the young people arrived. However, it fell in with the scheme he was plotting in his fertile brain. The girl had, in fact, promised the dance to the Conde de Agreda, but, on Castro's invitation, her desire to dance with him was so great that, with calm audacity, she accepted it.

The Duchess selected the Condesa de Cotorraso to lead the cotillon, and she took Cobo Ramirez for her partner. He was always welcome in a ball-room as a most accomplished leader of cotillons; and on this particular occasion he had held long conferences with Clementina as to the arrangements for this dance.

The circle of chairs was placed, and Pepe Castro went to lead out Esperanza, who proudly took his arm. But they had not gone two steps before Agreda intercepted them.

"Why, Esperancita, I thought you had promised me the cotillon?" he said in great surprise.

The girl's audacity did not desert her—the courage of a love-sick maid.

"You must, please, forgive me, Leon," said she, in a tone which the most consummate actress might have envied. "When I accepted you I quite forgot that I was engaged already to Pepe."

The Count retired, murmuring a few polite words, which did not conceal his annoyance. As soon as he was gone, Esperancita, frightened at the compromising interest in Castro which she had thus betrayed, began with many blushes to explain:

"The real truth is that I had forgotten that I was engaged to Leon," she said. "And as I had taken your arm—and besides, he is a most tiring partner."

Pepe Castro took no mean advantage of his triumph; his demeanour was modest and grateful. Instead of courting her openly, he adopted a more insinuating style, loading her with small attentions, establishing a tone of easy confidence, and showing her all possible fondness without breathing a word of love. Esperanza was supremely happy. She began to believe herself adored; fancying that the sympathy and regard which had always existed between Pepe and herself was at last turning to love. Her heart beat high with joy.

Ramoncita also was pleased at the substitution. Agreda had for some little time been particularly antipathetic to him, almost as much so as Cobo Ramirez, since he was beginning to be as jealous of the one as of the other. Pepe, on the other hand, he regarded as his second self, another and a superior Maldonado. All the affection Esperanza bestowed on Pepe he accepted as a boon to himself. So to see her on his arm was to him a touching sight, and as he went up to

them to say a few insignificant words he actually blushed with satisfaction. Pepe made a knowing face, as much as to say: "Victory all along the line!" and the young civilian felt that he was advancing with giant strides to the fulfilment of his hopes and the apogee of his happiness.

The cotillon was a worthy climax to this most successful ball. The inventiveness of Cobo Ramirez, spurred by the magnitude of the occasion, enchanted the dancers by the variety and ingenuity of its devices; he kept them amused for more than an hour. A game with a hoop arranged in the middle of the room absorbed every one's attention and earned him much applause. He divided the gentlemen into two parties, who shot alternately with arrows from pretty little gilt bows at the hoop suspended by a ribbon from the ceiling. The winners were entitled to dance with the partners of those they had defeated, while the humiliated victim followed in their wake, fanning them as they waltzed. Then he had planned another figure for the ladies; the successful fair left the room and returned sitting in a car drawn by four servants dressed as black slaves. In this she made a triumphal progress round the room, surrounded by the rest. This and other not less remarkable and valuable inventions had placed the fame of the heir of Casa Ramirez on a permanent and illustrious footing.

As soon as the cotillon was ended the company left—it was a noisy and precipitate retreat. Every one crowded out to the vestibule and stairs, talking at the top of their voices, laughing and calling, each louder than the other, for their carriages. The extensive garden, lighted by electricity, had a fantastic and unreal effect, like the scene in a fairy cosmorama. The beams of intense white light, making the shadows look black and deep, pierced the avenues of the park and lent it an appearance of immense extent. Night was ended, the pale tints of dawn were already grey in the East. It was intensely cold. The young "Savages," wrapped in fur coats, were letting off the last crackers of their wit in honour of the ladies who stood waiting, where their rich and picturesque wraps glittered in the electric

light. Horses stamping, footmen shouting, the carriage-wheels, as they slowly came round to the steps, grinding the gravel of the drive. Then there was the sound of kisses, doors slammed, loud good-nights ; and the noise of the vehicles, as they drove off from the terrace steps, seemed by degrees to swallow up all the others and carry them off to rest in the various quarters of the town.

Pepe Castro had kept close to Esperanza and was murmuring in her ear till the last. The girl, muffled up to her eyes, was smiling without looking at him. When at last the Calderón's carriage came up they shook hands with a long pressure.

"I hope you will not forget us for so long as usual; that you will come to see us oftener," she said, leaving her hand in his.

"Do you really wish that I should call more frequently?" said he, looking at her as if he meant to magnetise her.

"I should think I did!" As she spoke she coloured violently under her comforter, and snatching away her hand followed her mother to the carriage.

Pepa Frias had said to her daughter:

"When we go, child, I want Emilio to come with me. I am in such a state of nerves that I cannot sleep till I have given him my mind. We must have no more scandals, you see; I am going to propose an ultimatum. If he persists, you must come back to me and he may go to the devil."

She was in a great rage. Irene, though she would have liked to object to this arrangement, for she adored her fickle husband, did not dare to remonstrate; she submitted. When they were leaving, Pepa addressed her son-in-law:

"Emilio, do me the favour to see me home. I want to speak to you."

"Hang it all!" thought the young fellow.

And Irene?" he said.

"She can go alone The bogueys won't eat her," replied Pepa tartly.

"Worse and worse," Emilio reflected.

And, in point of fact, Irenita, eyeing her mother and her husband with fear and anxiety. went off alone in her carriage, leaving them together.

As Pepa's brougham rolled away, Emilio, to disarm his mother-in-law, tried, like the boy that he was, to divert the lightning by saying something to please her.

"Do you know," said he, "that I heard your praises loudly sung by the President of the Council and some men who were with him? They admired your costume immensely, but yet more your figure. They declared that there was not a girl in the room to compare with you for freshness, that your skin was like satin, and smoother and softer every day."

"Good heavens, what nonsense! That is all gammon, Emilio. A few years ago, I do not say——"

"No, no, indeed; your complexion is proverbial in Madrid. What would Irene give for a skin like her mother's!"

"Is it better than Maria Huerta's?" asked she, in an ironical tone, which betrayed, indeed, no very great annoyance.

Pepa had, in fact, changed her plan of attack; she thought that diplomacy would be more effective than a rating.

"Listen to me," she went on, "I meant to give you a good scolding, Emilio; to talk to you seriously, very seriously, and say a great many hard things, but I cannot. I am so foolishly soft-hearted that I can find excuses for every one. You have behaved so badly to Irenita this evening, that she would be justified in leaving you altogether; but I do not believe you are as bad as you seem, for you are nothing but a perverse boy. I am sure you do not yourself appreciate the gravity of your conduct."

Pepa's whole sermon was pitched in the same persuasive key, and Emilio, who had expected a severe lecture, was agreeably surprised. He listened submissively, and then in a broken voice tried to exculpate himself. He had flirted a little to be sure with Maria Huerta, but he swore he did not

care for her. It was a mere matter of pique and vanity. When his engagement to Irene was announced, Maria had been heard to say, in Osorio's house, that she could not understand how Irenita could bear to marry that ugly slip of a boy. He had sworn she should eat her own words—and so—and so—and that was all, on his word of honour, all.

So Pepa was still further mollified; and what wonder if the young fellow thought that this, and perhaps worse sins, were condoned by his profligate mother-in-law.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PIOUS MATINÉE.

A FEW days after the ball, at eleven in tne morning of a Friday in Lent, the most elegant of "Savages" woke from his calm and sound slumbers, fully determined to marry Calderón's little daughter. He opened his eyes, glanced at the hippic decorations which ornamented the walls of his room, stretched himself gracefully, drank a glass of lemonade which stood by his bedside, and prepared to rise. It cannot be positively asserted that the resolution had been formed during sleep, but it is quite certain that it was the birth of a mysterious travail which he had not consciously aided. When he went to bed Castro had only the vaguest thoughts of this advantageous alliance; on waking, his determination to sue for Esperanza's hand, by whatever process it had been elaborated, was irrevocable. Let us congratulate the happy damsel, and for the present devote our attention to studying the noble "Savage" in the act of perfecting the beautiful object which Nature had achieved in creating him.

His servant had prepared his bath. After looking in the glass to study the face of the day—his own—he took up some dumb-bells, and went through a few exercises. Then taking a foil, he practised a score or so of lunges, and finally he delivered a dozen or more punches on the pad of a dynamometer. Having accomplished this, the moment was come for him to step into the water. He was still splashing and sponging, when into his room, unannounced, walked the poor crazy Marquis Manolo Davalos.

"Pepe, I want to speak to you about a very important matter," said he, with an air of mystery, his eyes wilder than ever.

"Wait a minute; I am tubbing."

"Then make haste; I am in a great hurry."

Davalos rose from the chair into which he had dropped, and began walking up and down the room with a sort of feverish agitation, to which his friends had become accustomed. He could not remain still for five minutes. Any one else going through half the exercise he took in the course of the day would have been utterly exhausted before night. Castro watched him at first with contemptuous raillery in his eye; but he grew serious as he saw Manolo go up to the table and begin to play with a neat little revolver which Castro kept by his bedside.

"Look out there, Manolo! It is loaded."

"So I see, so I see," said the other with a smile; and turning round sharply, he added: "What do you think Madrid would say if I shot you dead?"

Pepe Castro felt a chill run down his spine, which was not altogether attributable to the cold bath, and he laughed rather queerly.

"And you know I could do it with impunity," his visitor went on, "as I am said to be mad——."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Castro laughed hysterically.

He was no coward; on the contrary, he had a reputation for punctilio and courage; but, like all fighting men, he liked a public. The prospect of an inglorious death at the hands of a maniac did not smile on his fancy. The example of Seneca, Marat, and other heroes who had been killed in their bath did nothing to encourage him, possibly because he had never heard of them. Davalos came towards him with the revolver cocked, saying:

"What will they say in town, eh? What will they say?"

Castro was as cold as though he were up to his chin in ice

instead of water with the chill off. However, he had presence of mind enough to say:

"Lay down that revolver, Manolo. If you don't, you shall never see Amparo again as long as you live." Amparo was the fair *demi-mondaine* whom we have already seen at the Duke's ball. She had ruined the Marquis, a widower with young children, who had seriously intended to marry the woman; and his brain, none of the strongest at any time, had finally given way, when his family had interfered to protect him from her rapacity.

"Never again! Why not?" he asked, dejection painted on his face, as he lowered the weapon.

"Becaue I will not allow it; I will tell her never to let you inside her doors."

"Well, well, my dear fellow, do not be put out, I was only in fun," said the lunatic, replacing the revolver on the table.

Castro jumped out of the bath. No sooner was he wrapped in the turkish towel, with which he dried himself, than he seized the weapon and locked it away. Easy in his mind now, though annoyed by the fright his crazy friend had given him, he began talking to him in a tone of contemptuous ill-humour, while, standing before his glass, he lavished on his handsome person, with the greatest respect, all the care due to its merits.

"Now, then, out with it, man, out with the great secret. One of your fool's errands as usual, I suppose. I declare, Manolo, you ought not to be allowed in the streets. You should go somewhere and be cured," he said, as he rubbed his arms with some scented unguent which he selected from the collection of pots and bottles of every size arrayed before him.

The Marquis put his hand in his pocket, took out his note-book, and from it a letter in a woman's hand, saying with some solemnity:

"She has just written me this note. I want you to read it."

Pepe did not even turn his head to look at the document

his friend held out to him. Absorbed at the moment in blending the ends of his moustache with his beard, he said in an absent-minded way:

"And what does she want?"

Davalos stared in surprise at the small interest he took in this precious missive.

"Shall I read it to you?"

"If it is not very long."

Manolo unfolded it as reverently as though it were the autograph of a saint, and read with deep emotion:

"MY DEAREST MANOLO,—Do me the favour to send me by the bearer two thousand pesetas,* of which I am in urgent need. If you have not so much about you, bring me the money this evening.—Always and entirely yours,

"AMPARO."

"My word! She is a cool hand. I suppose you did not send the money?"

"No."

"Quite right."

"Well, I had not got it. It is on purpose to see if you can help me that I have come here."

Castro turned round and contemplated his visitor with a look of surprise and irritation. Then, addressing himself to his glass again, he said:

"My dear Manolo, you are the greatest fool out. I am sure that when your aunt dies you will let that hussy spend the money for you as she has spent your own fortune."

The Marquis was in a fury.

"Do you know where the real wrong is?" he said. "It lies with my family, who, without rhyme or reason, interfere to prevent my marrying her. As my wife—as the mother of my motherless children—they would have been happy, and so should I!"

* About £80.

Castro stared at him in blank amazement. Tears stood on the Marquis's pale cheeks. Pepe made a grimace of contemptuous pity, and went on combing his moustache. After a few minutes' silence, he said:

"I am very sorry, old fellow. I have not got two thousand pesetas; but if I had I would not lend them to you for such a purpose, you may be very sure."

Davalos made no reply, but again paced the room.

"Whom can I ask?" he suddenly said, stopping short.

"Try Salabert," said Castro, with a short laugh.

Manolo clenched his fists and ground his teeth; his eyes glared ominously, and with a stride he went up to Pepe, who drew back a step, and prepared to defend himself.

"Such a speech is a gross insult!—an insult worthy of a bullet or a sword thrust! You are a coward—in your own house!"

His eyes started in a really terrific stare; but he did not succeed in provoking his friend. He ultimately controlled himself with a great effort, only flinging his hat on the floor with such violence as to crush it. Castro stood perfectly still, as if turned to stone. So often before he had jested with the crazy fellow, and said far rougher things, without his ever dreaming of taking offence, and now, by pure chance, as it seemed, he flew into this unaccountable rage. He tried to soothe him by an apology, but Manolo did not listen. Though he had got past the first impulse to struggle with him, he raged up and down like a caged wild beast, muttering threats and gesticulating vehemently. However, he soon broke down:

"I should never have believed it of you, Pepe," he murmured in a broken voice. "I should never have supposed that my best friend would so insult me—so stab me to the heart."

"But bless me, man——!"

"Do not speak to me, Pepe. You have stabbed me with a word; leave me in peace. God forgive you, as I forgive you!

I am like a hare wounded by the hunter, which runs to its form to die. Do not harry me any more; leave me to die in peace."

And the simile of the hare seemed to him so pathetic that he sank sobbing into an arm-chair. At the same time he had a severe fit of coughing, and Castro had to persuade him to drink a cup of lime-flower tea.

By the time the luckless Marquis had a little recovered, Pepe had achieved the adornment of his person, which he proceeded to take out walking, very correctly and exquisitely dressed in a frock-coat. He breakfasted at Lhardy's, looked in at the Club, and by three in the afternoon or thereabouts bent his steps to the house of the Marquesa de Alcudia, his aunt, in the Calle de San Mateo. This lady was, as we know, very proud of her religion, and equally so, to say the least, of her pedigree. Pepe was her favourite nephew, and, though his dissipated mode of life disgusted her not a little, she had always treated him with much affection, hoping to tempt him into the right way. In the Marquesa's opinion, quarterings of nobility were as efficacious in their way as the Sacrament of Ordination. Whatever villainies a noble might commit, he was still a noble, as a priest is always a priest.

Castro had thought of this devout lady as one likely to assist him in his project. His instincts—which were more to be depended on than his intelligence—told him that if the Marquesa undertook the negotiations for his marriage with Esperancita she would undoubtedly succeed. She was a person of much influence in fashionable society, and even more with those persons who, like Calderón, had gained a place in it by wealth.

The Alcudia's mansion was a gloomy structure, built in the fashion of the last century—a ground floor with large barred windows and one floor above; nothing more. But it covered a vast extent of ground, with a neglected garden in the rear. The entrance was not decorative; the outside steps rough-

hewn to begin with, and much worn. The late lamented Alcudia was proposing some repairs and improvements when death interfered with his plans. His widow abandoned them, not so much out of avarice as from intense conservatism, even in matters which most needed reform.

Within, the house was sumptuously fitted; the furniture was antique and very handsome; the walls hung with splendid tapestry; and fine pictures by the old masters graced the library and the oratory. This was indeed a marvel of splendour. It stood at one corner of the building on the ground floor, but was two storeys high, and as lofty, in fact, as a church. The windows were filled with stained glass, like those of a Gothic cathedral; the floor was richly carpeted; there was a small gallery with an organ; and the altar, in the French taste, was beautifully decorated. Over it hung an *Ecce Homo*, by Morales. It was an elegant and comfortable little chapel, warmed by a large stove in the cellar beneath.

In the drawing-room Pepe found only the girls, busy with their needlework. Their mother, they said, was in the study, writing letters. So, after exchanging a few words with his cousins, he joined her there.

"May I come in, aunt?"

"Come in, come in. You, Pepe?" said the Marquesa, looking up at him over the spectacles she wore for writing.

"If I am interrupting you I will go away. I want to consult you," said the young man, with a smile.

He took a chair, and while his aunt went on writing with a firm, swift hand, he meditated the exordium to the speech he was about to deliver. At last the pen dashed across the paper with a strident squeak, no doubt emphasising the writer's signature, and taking off her spectacles, she said:

"At your service, Pepe."

Pepe looked at the floor, praying no doubt for inspiration, twirled his moustache, cleared his throat and at last began with much solemnity.

"Well, aunt, I do not know whether it is that God has

touched my heart, or merely that I am weary of my present mode of life; but at any rate for some time past I have been taking to heart the advice you have so often given me, and which goes hand in hand with my own wish to settle down, to give up the bad habits which I have contracted for want of a father to guide me, and yet more of a mother, like yourself. I am very nearly thirty, and it is time to think of the name I bear. I owe a duty to that, and to my calling as a Christian; for in all my excesses I have never forgotten that I belong to an old Catholic family, and that nowadays in Spain it is incumbent on our class to protect the cause of religion and set a good example, as you do. The means I look to as an encouragement to the change I feel within me is marriage."

The penitent could not have chosen his words better in addressing his aunt Eugenia. They made so good an impression that she rose from her place and came to lay a hand on his shoulder, exclaiming:

"You delight me, Pepito. You cannot imagine what pleasure you give me. And you say you do not know whether God has touched your heart! How could you have undergone this sudden change, if He had not inspired it? It is the touch of God, indeed, my boy, the finger of God—and the noble blood which runs in your veins. Have you chosen a wife?"

The young man smiled and nodded.

"Who is she?"

"I had thought of Esperanza Calderón. What do you think of her?"

"Nothing could be better. She is very well brought up, attractive, and I love her as a child of my own. She has always been my Pacita's bosom friend, as you know. Your choice is a most happy one."

Castro smiled again with a gleam of mischief, as he went on:

"You see, aunt, I would rather have married a girl of our own rank. But, as you know, I am utterly ruined, and the

daughters of good families are not apt to have fortunes in these days. Those who have, would not have anything to say to me, as I have nothing to offer but what they already possess—a noble name. It is for this reason that I have chosen one of no birth, but with a good fortune."

"Very wise. And though we are compromising our dignity a little, we must save the name from disgrace. And Esperanza is a thoroughly good girl. She has been brought up among ourselves. She will always be a perfect lady, and do you credit."

The young man's face still wore that strange sarcastic smile. For a minute or two he remained silent; then he said:

"Do you know what we young fellows call a marriage of this kind?"

"No—what?"

"Eating dirt."

The Marquesa smiled frigidly, but then, looking grave again, she replied:

"No, that cannot be said in this case, Pepe. I can answer for this girl that she is worthy of a brilliant marriage. You will be a gainer. Are you engaged? Have you spoken to her? I have had no communication——"

"I have not said anything as yet. I know that she does not dislike me; we look kindly on each other, but nothing more. Before taking any definite steps I decided that I would speak to you as the person of most weight of our family in Madrid."

"Very proper; you have behaved admirably. When marriage is in question it is well to proceed with due caution and formality, for, after all, it is a sacrament of the Church.* In better times than these no alliance was ever contracted in the higher circles without consulting the opinion of the heads of both houses. I thank you for your confidence in me, and you may count on my approval."

* In the Roman Catholic Church.

"And on your assistance? You see I am afraid of meeting with some difficulties on her father's part. He loves hard cash. And to be frank, I should not relish a refusal."

The Marquesa sat meditating for a while.

"Leave him to me. I will do my best to bring him to reason. But you must promise to do nothing without consulting me. It is a delicate negotiation, and will need prudence and skill."

"I give you my word, aunt."

"Above all be very careful with the little girl. Do not startle her."

"I will do exactly what you bid me."

They presently went together into the drawing-room, where some visitors had arrived.

On Friday afternoons during Lent, the Marquesa received those of her friends who, like herself, would devote an hour or two to prayer and religious exercises. There were the Marquesa de Ujo and her daughter, still with her skirts far above her ancles, General Patiño, Lola Madariaga and her husband, Clementina Osorio, with her faithful companion Pascuala, and several others; and, above all, Padre Ortega. As, in fact, the honours of the occasion were his, and he was director of the entertainment, every one had gathered about him in the middle of the room. Every one talked louder than he did; the illustrious priest's voice was always soft and subdued, as though he were in a sick room. But as soon as he began to speak, silence instantly reigned—every one listened with respectful attention.

The Marquesa, on entering, kissed his hand with an air of submission, and inquired affectionately after a cold from which he had been suffering.

"Oh! have you a cold, Father?" inquired several ladies at once.

"A little, a mere trifle," replied the priest, with a smile of suave resignation.

"By no means a trifle," said the Marquesa. "Yesterday in church you coughed incessantly."

And she proceeded to give the minutest details of the reverend Father's sufferings, omitting nothing which could make her account more graphic. The priest sat smiling, with his eyes on the ground, saying:

"Do not let it disturb you, the Marquesa is always over anxious. You might think that I was in the last stage of consumption."

"But, Father, you must take care of yourself, you really must take care of yourself. You do too much. For the sake of religion you ought to spare yourself a little."

The whole party joined in advising him with affectionate interest. A maiden of seven-and-thirty, a sportive, gushing thing, whose confessor he was, even said, half seriously and half in jest:

"Why, Father, if you were to die, what would become of me?"

A sally which made the guests laugh, but somewhat disconcerted the very proper director of souls. The Marquesa wished to hinder him this afternoon from delivering the address with which he usually favoured them; but he insisted.

Meanwhile the room had been filling. Mariana Calderón had come in with Esperancita, the Cotorrasos, Pepa Frias, and Irene. She, poor child, looked pale and ailing; in fact, she had come straight from her room, to which she had been confined for some days with a nervous attack. When the party was large enough, the Marquesa invited them to retire to the Oratory. The ladies took front places near the altar, chairs and stools having been comfortably arranged for them, the gentlemen stood in the background and were provided only with a velvet-pile carpet to kneel on.

The meeting began by each one going through the prayers of the Rosary after Padre Ortega. The ladies did this with edifying precision and devotion, their ivory fingers, on which diamonds and emeralds twinkled like stars, piously crossed or clasped, their pretty heads bent low—they were quite be-

witching. The Creator must surely hearken to their prayers, if it were only out of gallantry. Not the least humble, the least engaging and edifying figure of them all was Pepa Frias. A black mantilla was most becoming to her russet hair and pink and white complexion. The same may be said of Clementina, who was taller, with more delicate features, and in no respect inferior in brilliancy and beauty of colouring. The languid and artistic attitudes affected by the fair devotees were no doubt intended to appeal to the Divine Will; but, as a secondary end, they were no less certainly meant to edify the escort of men who looked down on them. And, if by any chance there could have been a Freethinker among them, what confusion and shame must have possessed his soul on seeing that all that was most elegant and distinguished of the *High-life* of Madrid was enlisted in the service of the Lord.

Prayer being over, two of the ladies, accompanied by a baritone "Savage," went up into the gallery, and while another gentleman played the organ, they sang some of the finest airs from Rossini's *Stabat Mater*. As they listened, the pious souls felt a vague craving for the Opera house, for La Tosti and Gayarre, and confessed regretfully, in the depths of their hearts, that the amateur performance promised them in Heaven would be a stupendous and eternal bore. After the music came Padre Ortega's homily or lecture. The priest was accommodated on a sort of throne of ebony and marble in the middle of the chapel, the ladies moved their chairs and cushions, so as to face him, and the gentlemen formed an outer circle, and after a few moments of private meditation to collect his ideas, he began in a gentle tone to speak a few slow and solemn words, on the subject of the Christian Family.

As we know, Father Ortega was a priest quite up to the mark of modern civilisation, who kept his eye on the advance of rationalistic science that he might pounce down on it and put it to rout. Positivism, evolution, sociology, pessimism, were all familiar words to him, and did not frighten him, as they did most of his colleagues. He was on intimate terms with

them, and fond of using them to confute the pretensions of modern learning. What he esteemed to be his own strong ground, was the demonstration of the perfect compatibility of science with faith, the Harmony (with a capital H) between Religion and Philosophy. His discourse on the Family was profound and eloquent. To Father Ortega, that which constituted the Family was a reverence and love for tradition, reverence and love for the past. "The Family is Tradition—the tradition of its glory and of its name, of honour, virtue, and heroism; and all these may be summed up in two words: respect for elders—love and reverence, that is to say, for all that is highest and most conservative in the race."

Starting from this theorem, the preacher inveighed against revolution as against a gale from hell, blowing down all that was old, and clearing the ground for all that was new; against the barbarous hostility of our time to the beliefs, the manners, the laws, the institutions, and the glories of the past.

"The banners of revolution are inscribed with the motto: 'Despise the Elders,'" said he, "as though old creeds, old manners, old institutions, old aristocracies—though like everything human, they fall far short of perfection—did not represent the labours of our forefathers, their intelligence, their triumphs, their soul, life, and heart. And this being the case, how could revolutionary science, which casts its stupid contumely on everything ancient and venerable, fail to besmirch even our great ancestors with its scorn? One element of dissolution in the Family was the attack on property, directed by the revolutionary faction. This aggression was not merely adverse to the constitution of society, it was still more directly hostile to that of the Family. Property, inheritance, and the patrimony, what were they but the outcome of reverence for our forefathers on the one hand, of love for our children on the other? Property consolidates the present, the past, and the future of the Family; it is the spot where it has grown up and spread; the soil which, when the progenitors pass away,

assures them of rest beneath the tree of posterity, which shall grow up from it and call them blessed!"

Then, for above an hour, the learned Father proved the existence, on the most solid foundations, of the Christian family. Its bases were religion, tradition, and property. He spoke with decision, in a simple, convincing style, and emphatic but correct language. His audience were deeply attentive and docile, quite persuaded that it was the Holy Ghost which spoke by the mouth of the reverend preacher, commanding them to cherish tradition and religion, but, above all, property. The sublime thought was so elevating that some of the gentlemen present felt themselves united for all eternity to the Supreme Being by the sacred tie of landed estate, and registered a vow to fight for it heroically, and resist the passing of any law which, directly or indirectly, might affect its integrity.

When he ended he was rewarded by smiles of approbation and repressed murmurs of enthusiasm. Every one spoke in a whisper, out of respect to the sanctity of the spot. The bold damsel who just now had asked Father Ortega what she could do without him, flew to kiss his hand, with a succession of sounding smacks which made the rest of the company exchange meaning smiles of amusement, and the priest drew it away with evident annoyance. Once more, some ladies and gentlemen went up into the gallery and executed, in every sense of the word, some religious music by Gounod. Finally, all the saintly souls left the little chapel and returned to the drawing-room.

The Marquesa de Alcudia, a restless nature that knew no peace, at once proceeded to carry out her promise to her nephew. He saw her take Mariana aside; they quitted the room together. By-and-by they returned, and Castro could see that he had been the subject of their parley by the timid and affectionate glance bestowed on him by Esperancita's mother. Then he saw his aunt retire with Padre Ortega into

a corner where they had a private consultation, and again he suspected that he was their theme. The priest looked towards him two or three times with his vague, short-sighted eyes. He had taken care not to go near Esperanza, but they had exchanged smiles and looks from afar. The girl seemed surprised at his sudden reserve; for the last few days Pepe had been assiduous. She was beginning to be uneasy, and at last crossed the room to speak to him.

"You were not at the Opera last night; are you keeping Lent?"

"Oh, no!" said he, with a laugh. "I had a little headache and went to bed early."

"I do not wonder. What could you expect? You were riding a horse in the afternoon that did nothing but shy. He is a handsome beast, but much too lively. At one moment I thought he would have you off."

Castro smiled with a superior air, and the girl hastened to add: "I know you are a fine horseman; but an accident may happen to any one."

"What would you have done if I had been thrown?" he asked, looking her straight in the face.

"How do I know!" exclaimed the girl with a shrug, but she blushed deeply.

"Would you have screamed?"

"What strange things you ask me," said Esperanza, getting hotter and hotter. "I might perhaps—or I might not."

Just then the Marquesa de Alcudia addressed her.

"Esperanza, I want to speak to you."

And as she passed her nephew she said in a low voice:

"Prudence, Pepe! Asides are not in your part."

Any less superior soul would have felt some anxiety at seeing the two women leave the room together, some uneasiness as to the issue of this all-important interview; but our

friend was so far above the common herd in this, as in other matters, that he could chatter with the company with as much tranquillity as though his aunt and Esperanza had gone to discuss the fashions. When they presently returned, Esperanza's little face was in a glow, her eyes beaming with an expression of submission and happiness, which, but for fear of committing a deadly sin in Lent, we might compare to that of the Virgin Mary on the occasion when she was visited by the Angel Gabriel.

The meeting still preserved a sanctimonious tone. These chastened souls could not forget that they were celebrating the Fasting in the Wilderness. The young ladies round the piano piously abstained from singing anything frivolous; their voices were modulated to the *Ave Marias* of Schubert and Gounod, and other songs no less redolent of sacred emotion. They talked and laughed in subdued tones. If one of the young men spoke a little recklessly the ladies would call him to order, reminding him that on a Friday in Lent certain subjects were prohibited. The Spirit of God must indeed have been present with the meeting if we may judge from the resignation, the intense serenity, with which they all seemed to endure existence in this vale of tears. A placid smile was on every lip; the afternoon waned amid sacred song, mellifluous exhortation, and subdued mirth. The newspapers reported next day, with perfect truth, that these pious Fridays were quite delightful, and that the Marquesa de Alcudia did the honours in the name of the Almighty with exquisite grace.

The party at length dispersed. All these souls, so blessed and refreshed by faith, trooped out of the Alcudia Palace and made their way home, where they sat down to dine on hot turtle soup, mayonnaise of salmon, and salads of Brussels sprouts, beginning with prawns to sharpen their appetites. But, indeed, the hours of silent prayer and communion with the Divinity had already done this. Nothing is more effectual

in giving tone to the stomach than the sense of union with the Omnipotent, and the hope that, albeit there are fire and eternal torments for pickpockets and those misguided souls who do not believe in them, for all Christian families—those, that is to say, who believe in property and in their ancestors—there are certainly comfortable quarters in reserve, with an eternity of salmon mayonnaise and prawns *à la Parisienne.*

CHAPTER XIV

AN EXCURSION TO RIOSA.

THE Duke de Requena had given the last shake to the tree; the orange dropped into his hands golden and juicy. At a given moment his agents in Paris, London, and Madrid, bought up more than half of the Riosa shares. Thus the management, or, which was the same thing, the mine, was practically his. Some who had suspected his game, declined to sell, especially in Madrid, where the banker was well-known; and if he had not made haste to take the decisive step, the price would undoubtedly have become firmer. Llera scented the danger and gave the signal. It was a happy day for the Asturian when he received the telegrams from Paris and London. His hatchet-face was as radiant as that of a general who has just won a great battle. His clumsy arms waved in the air like the sails of a windmill, as he told the tale to the various men of business who had come to the Duke's counting-house to ask the news. Loud Homeric laughter shook his pigeon-breasted frame, he hugged his friends tightly enough to choke them; and when the Duke asked him a question, he answered even him with a touch of scorn from the heights of his triumph.

And yet he was not to get the smallest percentage on this immense transaction; not a single dollar of all the millions which were to come out of that mine would remain in his hands. But what matter! His calculations had proved correct; the scheme he had worked out with such secrecy, perseverance, and wonderful energy and skill, had come to the

desired issue. His joy was that of the artist who has succeeded—a joy compared with which all the other delights on earth are not worth a straw.

The Duke's satisfaction was of a different stamp. His vanity was indeed flattered by this brilliant success; he honestly thought that he had achieved an undertaking worthy to be recorded on marble and sung by poets. A proceeding which was in truth no more than a swindling trick, within the letter of the law, was by some strange aberration of the moral faculty transfigured into a glorious display of intellectual power—and that not alone in his own eyes, but in those of society at large. To celebrate his success, and at the same time to see for himself what improvements must be effected in the working of the mine to make it as productive as he intended it should become, he planned an excursion thither with the engineers and a party of his friends. At first they were to be eight or ten; by degrees the number grew, and when the day came round they formed a party of above fifty guests. This was chiefly owing to Clementina, who was greatly fascinated by the notion of this journey. Thus what had been in the Duke's mind a little friendly "day out," had, under her manipulation, acquired the proportions of a public event, a much talked-of and ostentatious progress, which for some days absorbed the attention of the fashionable world.

Salabert had a special train made up for his party; the servants and provisions were despatched the day before. Everything was to be arranged to receive them worthily It was the middle of May, and beginning to be hot. By nine in the morning the station of Las Delicias was crowded with carriages, out of which stepped ladies and gentlemen, dressed for the occasion; the women in smart costumes considered appropriate for a day in the country, the men in morning suits and felt hats. But to these apparently unpretending garments they had contrived to give a stamp of individual caprice, distinguishing them, as was but right, from all the shooting coats and wide-awakes hitherto invented. One had a flannel suit, as white as

snow, with black gloves and a black hat; another was in the inconspicuous motley of the lizard, crowned by a blue hat with a microscopic brim; a third had thought it an opportunity for turning out in a black jersey suit, with a white hat, white gloves, and boots. Many had hung a noble field-glass about their shoulders, by a leather strap, that they might not miss the smallest details of the landscape, and several flourished Alpine sticks, as if they were contemplating a perilous clamber over cliffs and rocks.

The special train included two saloon cars, a sleeping car, and a luggage van. The cream of Madrid society proceeded to settle itself, with the noisy glee befitting the occasion. There were more men than women; the ladies had, indeed, for the most part, excused themselves, not caring particularly for the prospect of visiting a mine. Still there were enough to lend grace to the expedition, and at the same time to subdue its tone a little. There were some whose fathers or husbands were connected with the business: Calderón's wife and daughter, Mrs. Biggs, Clementina, and others. There were some who had come out of friendship for these—Mercedes and Paz Alcudia, for instance, who were inseparable from Esperanza. There were more again who could never bear to be absent from any ploy: Pepa Frias, Lola, and a few more. Among the men were politicians, men of business, and titles new and old. As they got into the train the servile assiduity of the station-clerks betrayed how great an excitement was produced by the mere passage through the office of these potentates and grandees.

Last of all, and most potent of all, came the Duke de Requena, who, taking out his handkerchief, waved it from a window as a signal for departure. A whistle sounded, the engine responded with a long and noisy yell, then, puffing and snorting, the train began to move its metallic segments, and slowly quitted the station. The travellers waved their hands from the windows in farewell greetings to those who had come to see them off.

Great was the excitement and clatter as the train flew across

the barren plains around Madrid. Every one talked and laughed at once, as loud as possible, and what with this and the noise of the train, no one could hear. By degrees a sort of chemical diffusion or elective affinity took place. The Duke, seated in a coupé or compartment at the back of the train, found himself the centre of a group of financial and political magnates. Clementina, Pepa Frias, Lola, and some other women formed another party, with such men as preferred a lighter and more highly spiced style: Pinedo, Fuentes, and Calderón. The young men and maidens were exchanging witticisms which seemed to afford them infinite amusement. One of the incidents which most enchanted them was the appearance of Cobo Ramirez at the window, in a guard's coat and cap, demanding the tickets. Cobo, who had been in the foremost carriage, had clambered along by the foot-board, not without some risk, since the train was going at a tremendous speed. He was hailed with applause.

Then the young people sent notes to their friends in the other saloon, the young men inditing love-letters. The heir of Casa-Ramirez took charge of them all, and went to and fro between the cars very nimbly, considering his obesity. This amused them greatly for some time. The love-letters, written in pencil, were read aloud, with much applause and laughter.

Raimundo was content to talk to the Mexican and Osorio. Osorio had really taken a liking to him. Though but a boy in looks the banker discerned that he was intelligent and well-educated, and among the "Savages" such endowments as these conferred pre-eminence. The young man had, too, succeeded in adapting himself very sufficiently to the atmosphere which for the time he breathed. Not only was his dress visibly modified by the refinements of fashion and good taste, but his tone and manners had undergone a very perceptible change. In his behaviour to Clementina he was still the timid lad, the submissive slave, who hung on every word and gesture of his mistress; his love was taking deeper root in his heart every day. But in social intercourse he had accommodated himself

to what he saw around him. He did all in his power to repress the impulses of his loving and expansive nature. He assumed a grave indifference, an almost disdainful calm; ridiculed everything that was said in his hearing, unless it bore on the manners and customs of the Savage Club; learned to speak in a joking, ironical voice, like his fellow "Savages," and above all was on his guard against ever uttering any scientific or philosophical notions, for he knew by experience that this was the one unpardonable sin. He even kept his own counsel when one of his new associates roused him to a feeling of warmer sympathy and regard than the others. Affection is in itself so absurd that it is wise to bury it in the depths of your soul, or you expose yourself to some rebuff, even from the object of your affection. Such things have been known. Thanks to his diligence, and to an apprenticeship, which to him was a very cruel one, he extorted much more respect, and was looked on as a man of consummate *chic*, a height of happiness which it is given to few to attain to in this weary world beneath the stars.

When Cobo had made several journeys from one car to the other, in no small danger, as the train was flying onwards, Lola, with a mischievous look, first at Clementina and then at Alcázar, said to the young man:

"Alcázar, will you venture to go to the next carriage, and ask the Condesa de Cotorraso for her bottle of salts? I feel rather sea-sick."

Now Raimundo was, as we know, but a frail creature, who had never gone through the athletic training of these young aristocrats, his friends. The scramble along the foot-boards at the pace at which the train was going, which was to them mere child's play, was to him a service of real danger. He was apt to turn giddy when only crossing a bridge or climbing a tower. He was fully aware of this, and hesitated a moment; still, for very shame he could but reply:

"I will go at once, Señora," and he was about to act on her orders.

But Clementina, whose brows had knit at her friend's preposterous demand, stopped him, exclaiming:

"You certainly shall not go, Alcázar. We will make Cobo go for it next time he returns."

The young man stood doubtful with his hand on the door; but Clementina repeated more positively, colouring as she spoke:

"You are not to go—not on any account."

Raimundo turned to Lola with a bow.

"Forgive me, Señora, to-day I am sworn to this lady's service. I will be your slave some other day."

And neither Lola's noisy laugh, nor the sarcastic smiles of the others, could spoil the grateful emotion he experienced at his mistress's eager interest.

Ramon Maldonado was in the other saloon, where also were Esperanza and her mother with some other ladies, whom he deliberately laid himself out to charm by his discourse. He was giving them a full and particular report, in the most parliamentary style he could command, of some curious incidents in the last sitting. He was already master of all the commonplace of civic oratory, and knew the technical cant very thoroughly. He could talk of the order of the day, votes of confidence, private bills, committees of supply, the previous question, obstruction, suspension, and closure as if he himself were the patentee of this elaborate outcome of human ingenuity. He knew the municipal bye-laws as well as if he had invented them, and discussed questions of city dues, sewage, weights and measures, and seizure of contraband, so that it was a marvel to hear him. Finally, being a man of unfathomable ambition, he had joined a party in opposition to the Mayor, a step which he hoped might lead to his nomination as a member of the board of highways.

For a long time past he had been waging a covert but determined struggle against one Perez, another deputy not less ambitious than himself, for this very appointment, in which he believed that his great gifts as an innovator would

shine with peculiar splendour. The various public places of Madrid were awaiting the redeeming hand which might give them fresh life and splendour, and the hand could be none other than that of Maldonado. In the recesses of his brain, among a thousand other portentous schemes, there was one so audacious that he dared not communicate it to any one, while he was incubating it with the fondest care, determined to fight for this child of his genius till his dying day. This was no less than a plan for moving the fountain of Apollo from the Prado to the Puerta del Sol. And a whippersnapper fellow like Perez, a narrow-minded slow-coach, with no taste or spirit, dared to dispute the place with him!

At the moment when he was most absorbed in his narrative of how he had concocted the most ingenious intrigue to secure a vote of censure on the Mayor, Cobo—that inevitable spoil-sport—came up, and after listening for a minute, roughly attacked him, saying:

"Come, Ramoncito, do not give yourself airs. We know very well that you are a mere nobody in the House. Gonzalez can lead you by the nose wherever he wants you to go."

This was a cruel thrust at Maldonado, considering that it was before Esperancita and several other ladies, old and young. Indeed it stunned him as completely as if it had been a blow on the head with a cudgel. He turned pale, his lips quivered, and he could not utter a word. At last he gasped out:

"I? Gonzalez? Leads me by the nose? Are you crazy? No one leads me by the nose, much less Gonzalez, of all men!"

He spoke the last words with intense scorn; he denied Gonzalez as Peter denied his Master, out of base pride. His conscience told him that he was not speaking truly, though no cock crew. Gonzalez was the acknowledged leader of the civic minority, and at the bottom of his heart, Ramon held him in great veneration.

"Pooh! nonsense! Do you mean to tell me that Gonzalez

cannot make you work and dance like a puppet? Much good you dissidents would do if it were not for him."

On this Ramon recovered the use of his tongue, and to such good purpose, that he poured out above a thousand words in the course of a few minutes, with fierce vehemence, foaming and sputtering with rage. He rebuked with indignation the monstrous comparison of himself with a puppet, and fully explained the precise position held by Gonzalez in the city council and that which he himself occupied. But he did it with such frenzied excitement and gesticulation that the ladies looked at him in amused surprise.

"How eloquent he is! Who would have believed it of Ramoncito? Come, Cobo, do not tease him any more; you will make him ill!"

This compassionate tone stung Ramon to the quick. He was instantly speechless, and for at least an hour he wrapped himself in silent dignity.

The train drew up at a small station in the midst of a wide stretch of open moor, looking like a petrified sea; here the travellers were to take their mid-day meal. The Duke's servants, sent on the day before, had everything ready. Ramon devoted himself to the service of Esperanza, and she allowed him to wait on her with a placid smile which turned his head with joy. The reason of her condescension was that, by his aunt's particular desire, Pepe Castro had not joined the party. The matrimonial overtures, made under the greatest secrecy, required the utmost prudence. As Maldonado was so intimate with the lord of her heart, Esperanza felt a certain pleasure in keeping him at her side; at the same time she avoided comment by talking to the Conde de Agreda or to Cobo. Poor Ramon! How far he was from understanding these psychological complications.

They took their seats in the train once more, and went on their way across interminable sunburnt plains, no one dreaming of examining the landscape through those ponderous field-glasses. They reached Riosa shortly before dusk.

The famous mines of Riosa are situated in a hollow between two low ranges of hills, the spurs of a great mountain-chain, and are surrounded on all sides by broken ground, knolls and downs of no great height, but scarred and ravined in such a way as to look peculiarly barren and melancholy. In the hollow stands a town dating from the remotest antiquity. Our travellers did not invade it, they stopped about two kilomètres short of it, at a village named Villalegre, where the engineers and miners have settled themselves with a view to avoiding the mercurial and sulphurous fumes which slowly poison not the miners only, but all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. It is divided from the mines by a ridge, and is a striking contrast to the mining town itself. It is watered by a stream which makes it blossom like a garden, gay with wild lilies, jasmine, and heliotrope, and, above all, with damask roses, which have naturalised themselves there more completely than in any other region of Spain. The aromatic fragrance of thyme and fennel perfumes and purifies the air.

The most flowery plot in all the settlement belonged to the company, at about three hundred yards from the village. A handsome stone building stood in the midst of a garden, this was the residence of the head-manager, and the central office of the mines; round it, at some little distance, were several smaller dwellings, each with its little garden, occupied by clerks, and by some of the operatives; but most of these lived at Riosa.

There was no station at Villalegre, the train stopped where it crossed the road leading to the chief town of the province. Here carriages were in waiting to convey them to the head office, a drive of about ten minutes. At the park gate, and along the road, a crowd had gathered, which hailed the visitors with very faint enthusiasm. These were the men off their turn of work, whom the director had sent for from Riosa for the purpose. They were all pallid and earth-stained, their eyes were dull, and even from a distance it was easy to detect in their movements a certain indecision, which, when seen

closer, was a very perceptible trembling. The smart party of visitors drove close past this mob of ghosts—for such they seemed in the fading evening grey—the eyes of beauty and fashion met those of the miners, and from that contact not a spark of sympathy was struck. Behind the forced and melancholy smile of the labourers, a keen eye could very plainly detect hostility. Requena's little procession drove by in silence; these fine folks were visibly uneasy; they were very grave, not without a touch of alarm. The ladies involuntarily shrunk closer to the men, and as they turned in at the gates there was a murmur of "Good heavens! what faces!" and a sigh of relief at having escaped from the deep mysterious gaze of those haggard eyes. Rafael Alcantara alone was so bold as to utter a jesting remark.

"Well," said he, "the sovereign people are not attractive looking in these parts."

The manager introduced the clerks to Salabert, each by name. They were almost all natives of other parts of the country, healthy, smiling young fellows, with nothing noticeable about them, and the superintendents no less so. The only man of them all who attracted any attention was a delicate-looking man, with a pale face, and thin black moustache, whose steady dark eyes looked at the fashionable visitors with such piercing determination as bordered on insolence. Without knowing why, those who met his gaze felt vaguely uncomfortable, and were glad to look away. The manager introduced him as the doctor attached to the mines.

Rooms had been found for all the party, some in the director's house, and others in those of the humbler residents. When they had taken a little rest, they all met in the director's drawing-room, and from thence they marched arm-in-arm, in solemn procession, to the office board-room, which had been transformed into a dining-room. Here the Duke gave them a magnificent dinner. Nothing was missing of the most refined and aristocratic entertainment; the plate and china, the cooking, and the service were all perfection. While they dined

the grounds were lighted up with Venetian lamps, and on rising from table, every one rushed to the window to admire the effect, which was dazzlingly beautiful. An orchestra, concealed in an arbour, played national airs with great spirit. The whole party, panting from the heat of the room, which was intense, and tempted by the brilliant spectacle, went out to wander about the gardens ; the younger men carried off the girls to a grass-plot, close to the band, and there began to dance. Cobo Ramirez presently joined the group.

"Do you know what you remind me of?" he shouted. "A party of commercial travellers in some suburban café!"

This comparison seemed to hurt their feelings deeply ; the dancing lost its attractions for the fashionable juveniles, and soon ceased altogether. However, as their hearts were set on Terpsichorean delights, it occurred to them to transfer the music to the board room, where they continued their devotions to the Muse, free from the dreadful burden which Cobo had laid on their conscience.

The festivities were carried on till late. Fireworks were presently let off, having been brought expressly from Madrid. The various couples wandered about the gravelled paths, enjoying the coolness of the night, made fragrant by the scent of flowers. There was but one dark blot on their perfect enjoyment. When they went near the gate, they saw a crowd outside, of labourers, women, and children, who had come from Riosa, on hearing of the great doings—the same haggard creatures, hollow-eyed and gloomy, as they had met on arriving. So they took care not to go too near the fence, but to remain in the paths and alleys near the middle of the garden. Lola, only, who prided herself on being charitable, and who was president, secretary, and treasurer of no less than three societies, was brave enough to speak to them, and even to distribute some small silver money ; but out of the darkness came obscene abuse and insults, which compelled her to retreat. Cotorraso, when he heard of it, was in a great rage.

"And these Bedouin savages are to have rights and

liberties! Let them first be made decent, civil, and well-behaved, and then we will talk about it."

The law of elective affinity had drawn together Raimundo Alcázar and a man who was somewhat out of his element in this riotous company. This gentleman, with whom he was walking, was between fifty and sixty years of age, short and thin, with a white moustache and beard, and prominent eyes, with a somewhat absent gaze through his spectacles. His name was Don Juan Peñalver; he held a chair of philosophy at the University, and had been in the Ministry. He enjoyed a high and deserved reputation for learning, and for a dignity of character rare in Spain. This naturally brought him into ill-odour with the "Savages," who affected to treat him with contemptuous familiarity. It is obvious that nothing can be more offensive to the average "Savage" than Philosophy. Peñalver's intellectual superiority and fame was a stab to their pride. Their scorn did not trouble him; he was by nature cheerful, warm-heated, and absent-minded; he was incapable of discriminating the various shades of social manner, and, in fact, had not been much seen in the world since retiring from political life to devote himself exclusively to science. He had joined this expedition to oblige his brother-in-law, Escosura, who held a large number of shares in the Riosa mines. Of late years he had been an ardent student of natural science, as the surest way of combatting the metaphysical idealism to which he had devoted his early life. It was with real pleasure that he found himself accidentally thrown into the company of a youth so well-informed on scientific matters as Raimundo. The rest of the party bored him past endurance, so taking Alcázar by the arm, without inquiring whether he wanted him or no, he began discussing physiology.

Raimundo was in a fit of despondency and gloom. He had observed that this Escosura had been definitively making love to Clementina; he was quite shameless in his attentions to her wherever he happened to meet her, and affected to ignore her connection with Raimundo. Both in mind and person

Escosura was the exact opposite of his brother-in-law Peñalver. He was tall and stout, with a burly person and noisy manners; rich, of some influence politically, a vehement orator, with a voice so unusually sonorous that, according to his enemies, it was to that he owed his parliamentary successes. He was a man of about forty, and had never been Minister, though he asserted that he should soon be in office. Clementina had already repelled his addresses several times, and this Raimundo knew, and was proud of his own triumph. At the same time he could not divest himself of some anxiety whenever, as at this moment, he saw them talking together.

They were sitting in a summer-house with several other persons, but conversing apart with great animation. Each time he and Peñalver went past them, his heart swelled with a pang; he scarcely heard, or even tried to hear, the learned disquisition his companion was pouring into his ear. Clementina could read in his anxious gaze how much he was suffering, and after watching him for a little while she rose and joined the two men, saying with a smile:

"And what plot are you two sages hatching?"

"You flatter me," said the younger with a modest bow. "The only sage here is Señor Peñalver."

"Well, Señor Peñalver can bestow a lecture on the Condesa de Cotorraso, who is anxious to make his acquaintance, while you come with me to see a Gothic cathedral which is about to explode in fireworks," and she put her hand through her lover's arm.

Alcázar was happy again. He did not even speak to her of the anguish he had suffered but a moment ago; on other occasions when he had made such a confession it had only led to double pain, for Clementina would answer him in a tone of light banter which wounded him to the heart. They watched the wonderful, blazing cathedral till it was burnt out; the gentle pressure of her hand, the scent—always the same—which hung about her sweet person were too much for the young man, who was predisposed to be overcome by the proof

of affection his beloved had just given him. She, who knew him well, as she felt him press her arm more closely, looked in his face, sure that she should see tears in his eyes In fact, Raimundo was silently weeping. On finding himself detected, he smiled in a shamefaced way.

"Still such a baby!" she exclaimed, giving him a caressing little pinch. "Pepa is right when she says you are like a school-girl in a convent. Come, let us walk about; some one might see your face."

They went into a more retired part of the garden. From one spot in the grounds they could see a very curious landscape. The full moon lighted up the crest of the nearest hill, which divided Villalegre from Riosa, making it look like the ruins of a castle. Clementina wished to see it closer, so they went out by one of the side-gates, where no one was to be seen, and slowly wandered on—the knoll was barren of vegetation, a pile of boulders, in fact, of fantastic shapes, looking precisely like a mass of ruins. It was not till they were close to it that they could convince themselves of the truth.

When the lady had satisfied her curiosity, they returned round the outside of the park, to enter by the opposite gate. On this side there were still a few knots of people. Before reaching the gate, at a corner of the road darkened by the shade of some trees, Clementina stumbled over an object, and nearly fell. She screamed aloud, for on looking down she saw a human creature lying at her feet. Raimundo took out a match, and found that it was a boy of ten or twelve fast asleep. They picked him up, and set him on his feet. The little fellow opened his eyes and stared at them in alarm. Then, as if by a sudden inspiration, he snatched the stick Raimundo was carrying, and began to move it slowly up and down, as though he were fulfilling some very difficult task. Clementina and her lover looked on in amazement, unable to guess what this could mean. A few workmen collected round them, and one with a horse-laugh exclaimed:

"For my part I think the fresh air up here is much better to breathe than the foul air down below."

"Why, of course. I would be anything rather than a miner."

They came out at length on a small open space, where some workmen were busy erecting an artistic pedestal of marble.

"This is the pedestal for the statue of the Duke," said the manager of the mines, in a loud voice.

"Ah, ah! They are going to put up a statue to you?" said one and another, gathering round the great man. He shrugged his shoulders with a deprecating gesture.

"I am sure I don't know. Some absurd notion that has been started in the miners' wine-shops, I suppose."

"No, indeed, Señor Duque," exclaimed the manager, whose duty it had been to start the idea which Llera had suggested to him at a hint from Salabert himself. "No, indeed. The town of Riosa is anxious to erect a monument of its gratitude and respect to a noble patron who, in the most critical circumstances, did not hesitate to risk an enormous sum in the purchase of a half-ruined undertaking, and so to save it from utter disaster."

"What a beautiful thing it is to do good!" exclaimed Lola, in a voice full of feeling; and her pretty eyes rested admiringly on Requena.

Every one complimented him; though many of those present knew the meaning of this magnificent sacrifice. They looked at the work for a minute or two, and then proceeded on their way. The mines were close to the town, on the further side. Outwardly they looked like a manufactory on a small scale, with a few tall chimneys vomiting black smoke. There was nothing to betray their colossal value. The party went into the buildings and over the premises where the subsidiary processes of the works were carried on, and which included carpenters' sheds and forges, the engineers' office and private room, &c. But what impressed them all was the sad and sickly appearance of the operatives. They were all broken

with decrepitude, and the Condesa de Cotorraso could not help saying:

"Only old men seem to be employed."

The manager smiled. "They are not old, though they look so, Señora."

"But they are all wrinkled, and their eyes are sunken and dim."

"There is not a man of forty among them. Those whom you see at work here are too far gone to work underground. We employ them up here, but they get less wages."

"And does it take long in the mines to reduce them to this condition?" asked Ramon.

"Not long, not long," murmured the manager, and he went on: "Such as you see them, they are always eager to get back to the mine again. The pay for outside work is so small."

"What do they get?"

"A peseta a day; six reales at most."*

They next visited the smelting-houses. The Duke had gone on first with the English engineer, whom he had engaged to report on the improvements needed to make the works pay. In these sheds they saw huge furnaces, piles of cinnabar and stores of mercury.

The furnaces consist of a retort in which the cinnabar is placed with the combustibles for calcining it. From this retort earthenware condensers rise, branching off into pipes communicating with each other. In these pipes the vapours of mercury which rise from the furnace are reduced by condensation to the liquid state; and the quicksilver is precipitated and flows out by holes in the lower face of the pipes. But as a large amount of sooty matter remains, containing particles of metal, it is necessary to remove and clean the condensers one by one. This is the work of boys, of from ten to fifteen, who, for seven or eight hours at a time, breathe an atmosphere charged with mercurial poison. They next visited the stores and the shed where the

* From 10*d.* to 1*s.* 3*d.*

mineral is weighed for sale. And everywhere the operatives wore the same appearance of decrepitude.

The manager now proposed that they should inspect the hospital. Some refused, but Lola, who never missed an opportunity of displaying her benevolent sentiments, set the example, and most of the ladies followed her, with a few of the men. The Duke excused himself, as he was busy with the engineers, who were giving him their opinion on the state of the furnaces.

The hospital was outside the precincts of the mines, near the burial-ground—no doubt to accustom the inmates to the idea of death, and also, perhaps, that if the mercurial vapours proved ineffectual to kill them, those of the graveyard might finish the task. It was an old building, tumble-down, damp, and gloomy. It was only sheer shame which hindered the ladies from turning back from the threshold. The doctor, who had undertaken to guide them, showed them into the different rooms, and displayed the dreadful panorama of human suffering. Most of the poor wretches were dressed, and sitting on their beds or on chairs. Their drawn, corpse-like faces were objects of terror; their bodies shook with incessant trembling, as though they were stricken with a common panic. Fear and pity were painted on the fresh faces of their visitors; and the doctor smiled his peculiar smile, looking at them boldly with his large, black eyes.

"Not a pleasing picture, is it?" said he.

"Poor creatures! And are they all miners?"

"Yes, all. The atmosphere they live in, vitiated by mercurial vapours, and the insufficient supply of fresh air, inevitably produce not only this trembling from acute or chronic mercurial poisoning—which is the most conspicuous result—but pulmonary catarrh of an aggravated type, dysentery, tuberculosis, mercurial irritation of the stomach, and many other diseases which either shorten their lives or render them incapable of labour after a few years spent under ground."

"Poor things—poor creatures!" repeated his hearers.

The little party who had followed his guidance listened to him with attention and sympathy. Never had they seen anything so terrible. Labour—a penalty in itself—was here complicated with poisoning; and with sincere emotion, full of the best intentions, they suggested means of alleviating the misery of the sufferers. Some declared that a good hospital ought to be erected; others suggested a shop, on charitable principles, where the workmen could obtain good food at a cheap rate; others urged that the children should not be employed at all; others again that the labourers should be allowed to work for only a very limited time.

The doctor smiled and shook his head.

"All this would be admirable, no doubt; I quite agree with you. But then, as I can but tell you, it would not be a paying business."

They distributed some money among the sick, visited the chapel, where again they left some money to procure a new robe for the Holy Infant, and at last got out of the dismal place. To breathe the fresh air once more was almost intoxicating, and they laughed and talked as they made their way back to join the rest of the party.

The engineers were explaining to Salabert a new process of sublimation which might be adopted, and by which not only would the production be vastly increased, but the residue would be utilised. This was effected by condensers formed of chambers of very thin brickwork in the lower part of the funnel carrying off the vapour, and of wood and glass above. A furnace to which these were fitted could be kept constantly going. The Duke listened attentively, took notes, raised objections, mastered the details of the business, and finally his keen nose scented enormous profits.

As the ladies came up he gallantly postponed the discussion.

"Well, how are my sick getting on, ladies? The sun has shone on them to-day," said he.

"Badly, Duke, very badly. The hospital leaves much to be desired."

And with one accord they complained of the defects of the building, painting it in the blackest colours, and proposing improvements to make it comfortable.

The Duke listened with smiling indifference and the half-ironical attention we give to a coaxing child.

"Very well, very well; we will have it all seen to. But you will allow me to set the business on its feet first—eh, Regnault?"

The superintendent bowed with an insinuating smile.

"And the men must work shorter hours," said the Condesa de Cebal.

"And they really must be better paid," added Lola.

"And they ought to have cottages built for them at Villalegre," said another.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the Duke, with a burst of coarse laughter. "And why not bring Gayarre and Tosti here to entertain them in the evening? They must be dreadfully dull here, I should think, in the evenings!"

The ladies smiled timidly.

"But really, Duke, you should not make fun of it; it is a serious matter," said the Condesa de Cebal.

"Serious! I believe you, Condesa. It has cost me three million dollars already. Do you think three millions are not a serious matter?"

His fair advisers looked at each other, dazzled by the enormous sums this man could handle.

"But do you not expect to get some interest on your millions?" asked Lola, who flattered herself she knew something of business.

The Duke again roared with laughter.

"Oh no, Señora, of course not. I shall leave that in the road for the first passer by. Interest indeed!" Then suddenly turning serious, he went on: "Who the devil has been putting this nonsense into your heads? I tell you, ladies, that what is lacking here—sadly lacking—is sound morality. Make the workman soundly moral, and all the evils you have seen

will disappear. Let him give up drink, give up gambling, give up wasting his wages, and all these effects of the mercury will disappear. It is self-evident,"—and he appealed to some of the gentlemen who had joined the group—"How can a man resist the effects of mining when his body, instead of food, be it what it may, contains a gallon of bad brandy? I am perfectly convinced that the majority of those on the sick list are confirmed drunkards. Do you know, gentlemen, that in Riosa thrift is a thing unknown—thrift, without which prosperity and comfort are an impossibility?"

This was a maxim the Duke had frequently heard in the senate; he reiterated it with much emphasis and conviction.

"But how do you expect thrift on two pesetas* a day?" the Condesa ventured to demur.

"There is no difficulty at all," said the Duke. "Thrift is a matter of principle, the principle of saving something out of today's enjoyment to avoid the needs of to-morrow. Two pesetas to a workman are like two thousand to you. Cannot you save something out of two thousand? Well, so can he out of two. Say he has less, fifteen centimes, ten, five. The point is to put something aside, and that, however little, is to the good."

"Merciful Heaven!" the Condesa sighed, "What I do not understand is how any one can live on two pesetas, much less save."

The engineers of the works invited the party to inspect the machine-room and laboratory. There was here a remarkably fine microscope, which attracted general attention. The doctor was the person who used it most, devoting much of his time to investigations in histology. The manager requested him to show the Duke's guests some of his preparations. First he exhibited some diatoms—the ladies were charmed by their various forms; he also showed them specimens of the animalcule

* 1*s.* 7*d.*; its purchasing value is probably at least half as much again.

which wrought the destruction of the famous bridge at Milan; they could not cease marvelling that so minute a creature should be able to demolish so huge a structure.

"And think of the myriads of these creatures which must have laboured to produce such an effect," said an engineer.

Quiroga, so the doctor was called, ended by showing them a drop of water. One by one they all looked at the invisible world revealed by the microscope.

"I see one animal larger than the others," said the Duke, as he applied one of his prominent eyes to the tube of the instrument.

"And you will see all the others fly before him," said the doctor.

"Very true."

"That is a rotifer. He is the shark of the drop of water."

"Look yourself a minute, it seems to me that he is hiding behind something that looks like seaweed."

"You may call it seaweed. Perhaps he is hiding to catch his prey."

"Yes, yes. Now he has rushed out on a much smaller creature. It is gone, he must have eaten it."

And the Duke looked up, beaming with satisfaction at having seen this strange microscopic tragedy.

Quiroga looked at him with his bold gaze, and said with that eternal ironical smile of his:

"It is the same all the world over. In the drop of water as in the ocean—everywhere the big fish swallow the small fry."

The Duke's smile faded away. He gave a side glance at the doctor, whose mysterious countenance showed no change, and said abruptly:

"You must all be tired of science. Let us go to luncheon."

The crowning attraction of the expedition which had brought all this gay company away from their luxurious homes to so

comfortless and barren a region, was a plan for breakfasting, or rather lunching, at the bottom of the mine. When Clementina had mentioned this at one of her card parties it gave rise to a perfect burst of enthusiasm.

"How very original! How odd! How delightful!" The ladies especially were most eager about it.

By the Duke's advice, they all had provided themselves with elegant waterproof cloaks and high boots, for water oozed into the mine in many places, and made deep puddles. Only the evening before, however, several had taken fright at the immediate prospect, and had given up the expedition. The Duke had been obliged to order two meals, one in the mine and one above ground. The braver party who persisted in their purpose were not more than eight or ten. These had brought their waterproofs and leggings.

The whole party now gathered round one of the mouths of the mine known as San Gennaro's pit. Near this shaft there was a building used for inspecting and weighing the ore, and there the ladies and gentlemen changed their boots and put on their wrappers. On seeing them thus prepared for the worst, almost all the ladies declared that they would after all go down with their friends. A messenger was forthwith sent to Villalegre for the rest of the waterproofs.

The cage, worked up and down by steam, had been prepared for the reception of this elegant company. It had two floors, on each of which eight persons could stand. It had been lined with baize, and a few brass rings had been fitted to hold on by. The director, the Duke, and the valiant ladies who had come prepared, went down first. Orders were given to the engineer to send the lift down very slowly. It began to move, at first rising a few inches, and then descending with a jerk; then, suddenly, it seemed to be swallowed in the shaft. The women smothered a cry and stood speechless and pale. The walls of the shaft were dark, rough-hewn, and streaming with water; in each division of the cage a miner with a palsied hand held up a lantern. All, excepting the manager and the miners

accustomed to the motion, had an uneasy feeling in the stomach, and a vague apprehension which made them incapable of speech, and they clenched their hands very tightly as they clung to the rings.

"The first gallery," said the manager, as they passed a black opening.

But no one made any remark. This suspension in the abyss, over the unknown void, paralysed their tongues and almost their power of thought.

"The second gallery," said the manager again as they passed another yawning hole. And thus he continued till they came to the ninth. There they heard the sound of voices and saw that the gallery was lighted up.

"We shall take our luncheon here. But first we will go down to the eleventh gallery to see the works."

When they had gone past the tenth, he shouted as loud as he could:

"Are the brakes on?"

And a voice from below replied:

"No!"

"Put them on at once," he called down.

"It cannot be done," was the answer.

"What, why? The brakes, I say; put on the brakes."

And with a very red face, almost convulsed with excitement, he still shouted like a madman, while the cage slowly went down, down.

A cold chill fell on every heart. In the upper compartment some of the women began to utter piercing shrieks. In the lower room a few screams were heard and all clung tightly to the men's arms. Some fainted. It was a moment of indescribable alarm. They all thought this was their dying hour.

And still the manager kept shouting: "The brakes, put on the brakes."

And the voices below, more and more distinct, replying: "It cannot be done."

When they firmly believed that they were rushing into the nether void the cage quietly stopped. They heard a peal of loud laughter, and their terrified eyes beheld, by the tremulous light of tallow candles, a party of miners whose grinning faces suddenly assumed an expression of the utmost alarm and dismay.

"What is all this? What is the meaning of this piece of foolery?" asked the manager, jumping out of the lift in a rage and going up to them.

The men respectfully took off their hats and one of them with a shame-faced smile stammered out:

"Begging your pardon, Señor, we thought it was a lot of the men, and we wanted to give 'em a fright."

"Did not you know that we were coming down?" he angrily asked.

"We thought the gentlefolks were going to stop at number nine, where all the fine doings are to be——"

"You thought, and you thought; you should not think such stupid things."

The Duke recovered the use of his tongue.

"But do you know, my good fellows, that you were playing a very rough and ready joke on your fellow workmen! Making them fancy they were rushing to their death!"

"Their death!" echoed the miner who had first spoken.

"No, Señor Duque," said the manager, "if they had not put the breaks on we should only have been up to our waists in water."

"Is that all?"

"Would you have liked a bath in dirty water?"

"Well, of course it would not have been a pleasant dip. But to see you in such a state of frenzy made us all think we were being killed outright. What do you say, ladies?"

The ladies were relieving their minds by exclamations; some crying and some laughing. Two who had fainted received every attention, their temples were bathed with cold water, and the Condesa de Cotorraso's salts were brought into requisition.

At last they recovered their senses, and the rest congratulated themselves on having escaped from such fearful peril, for they could not bear to think that there had been none. They looked forward to exciting the sympathy of their friends at home by the narrative of this horrible adventure, and believed themselves the heroines of a story in the style of Jules Verne.

The spectacle which presented itself to their eyes when they could bring themselves to look at it, was not less grand than fantastic. Huge vaulted arches diverged in every direction, lighted only by the pale light of a few candles placed at wide intervals. To and fro in these galleries, with incessant toil, a crowd of labourers were constantly moving, their gigantic shadows dancing in the dim, flickering light. Their shouts echoed to the accompaniment of creaking trolley-wheels, and they seemed possessed with the idea of accomplishing some mysterious task in a very short time. In some of the galleries the walls were lined with crystals of native mercury, glittering as though they were covered with silver. On the other side of these walls, dull regular blows might be heard, and on going a few yards into the openings which had been formed here and there, they could see at the end, in an illuminated cavern, four or five pale, melancholy men hewing out the ore with their pick-axes. Whenever they stopped to rest it could be seen that their limbs shook with the palsy, characteristic of mercurial poisoning.

It would have been easy to fancy oneself translated to the world of gnomes, and the scene of their mysterious labours. Man burrows in the earth with incessant toil like the mole, tunnelling it in every direction; but he poisons himself as he eats it away. The gods could get rid of the human rat without the aid of the cat.

Suddenly Lola gave a piercing shriek, which made every one look round, but she immediately burst out laughing. A driplet of water from the roof had trickled down her back. Every one laughed at the accident, but the mirth was not very genuine.

At these depths every one was aware of a vague uneasiness, even fear, which they strove to conceal. The cage brought down another large party, but the third time it was almost empty, for the rest of the company had preferred to be deposited in the ninth gallery, feeling no particular interest in the mining operations. Those who had come to the bottom were unfeignedly desirous of finding themselves as soon as possible in more commodious quarters. They asked the manager again and again whether they were safe, if there was no fear of the vault falling in.

"Oh, no," said the manager with a smile. "Only private mines fall in. This was a Government concern, and everything was done with lavish security."

"I have been in mines where we have had to send a party of men down to dig the miners out," said one of the engineers.

"How shocking!" exclaimed the ladies in chorus.

At last they got into the cage again and were carried up to number nine. Here the scene was very different. It was a long time since this gallery had been worked, and part of it had been enlarged to form a chamber, which had been enclosed, boarded, and carpeted; it might have been a room in a palace. The roof and walls were hung with waterproof cloth and adorned with trophies of mining. A table was magnificently laid for fifty or more, and the place was brilliantly illuminated by means of lustres with hundreds of wax lights. In short every refinement of luxury and elegance had been lavished here, so that it was difficult to persuade oneself that this dining-room was in the depths of a mine, three hundred mètres below the surface of the earth.

The guests took their seats with a sense of excitement, a combination of pleased admiration and vague alarm, which was written on their smiling but pale faces. The servants in livery stood in a row as if they had been at home in Madrid. As the first course was handed round, a band, hidden away in an adjoining gallery of the mine, struck up a charming waltz tune,

and the sounds, softened by distance, had a delightful and soothing effect.

The ladies, their eyes glistening, tremulous with excitement, repeated again and again: "How original, how amusing, I am so glad I came, what a delightful idea of Clementina's!"

Then they tried to be calm and talk of indifferent subjects; but no one succeeded. The sense of so many tons of earth overhead weighed on their consciousness through it all. Nay, with some of the men it was the same, though some were perfectly calm.

Raimundo was, no doubt, the man who thought least of his immediate surroundings; he was entirely absorbed in his moral predicament. Clementina, in spite of her professions and promises, was carrying on a hot flirtation with Escosura. They were placed side by side, exactly opposite to where he sat. He could see them talking eagerly, and laughing frequently; he saw him devoted, obsequious, lavish of compliments and attentions; he saw her complacent, smiling, and accepting his civilities with pleasure. And though from time to time she bestowed on Raimundo a loving look in compensation, he could only regard it as an alms—the crust bestowed on a beggar to save him from death. What did he care whether he were on the face or in the centre of the earth, or even if it should fall in and crush him like a fly.

Another person to whom this geographical question was a matter of supreme indifference was Ramoncito, though from the opposite point of view. Esperanza was most amiable to him, perhaps because she thought she could thus the better endure the absence of Pepe Castro. The young deputy, beside himself with joy, never stired an inch further from her side, or for a moment longer than appearances demanded. Triumphantly happy, he cast occasional glances of condescending grace on the rest of the company, and when his eyes fell on Calderón's financial face his emotion was visible; he could hardly forbear from addressing him as "Papa."

As the meal progressed, the superincumbent earth weighed

less heavily on their souls. Heady wines warmed their blood, and talk revived their spirits. Every one had forgotten the mine as completely as if they had been sitting in an ordinary handsome dining-room. Rafael Alcantara was amusing himself by making Peñalver drunk. Encouraged by the laughter of his companions, who looked on, he did his utmost to befool the philosopher, addressing him in a loud voice with extreme familiarity, winking at his allies each time he made some blunder, taking base advantage, in short, of the worthy gentleman's benevolent and unsuspicious temper. He had taken upon himself to avenge the whole body of illustrious pipe-colouring youth for the intellectual pre-eminence for which the great thinker was noted.

When dessert was served Escosura rose to propose a toast. He was an object of respect to the "Savages," partly from his corpulence and his vehement temper, but chiefly by reason of his money. He considered himself an orator. In a strong, ringing voice, he pronounced a panegyric on the Duke, whom he repeatedly designated as "that financial genius." He enlarged on labour, capital, and production; and went on to politics—his strong point. From the depths of the quicksilver mine he shot terrific darts at the Ministry, which had failed to give him a portfolio at the last change of Cabinet.

Salabert replied with much hesitancy, thanking him with grovelling self-abasement. "No merit of his own beyond industry and honesty had raised him to the proud position he held (murmured applause). The nation, the sovereign who had ennobled him, had ennobled a son of toil. By struggling all his life against a tide of difficulties, he had succeeded in collecting a handful of money. This money now enabled him to maintain some thousands of workmen. This was his best reward (applause). He begged to propose the health of the ladies, whose courage had brought down to this subterranean hole, and who would leave behind them, a fragrance of charity and joy, which would live for ever in the hearts of the mining-folk."

At this instant, simultaneously with the pop of several champagne corks, a tremendous detonation was heard, making the bravest turn pale.

"There is nothing to be alarmed at," said the manager. "They are exploding the borings. It is always done at this hour."

It was in truth an impressive moment. The noise of each explosion, multiplied and repeated by a thousand echoes, was enough to make the stoutest heart quake with faint alarms. Every one was suddenly silenced, listening for some seconds, with absorbed anxiety, to the rolling thunders which shook the earth. The table quivered, and the glasses and dishes rattled and tinkled.

At this moment, the doctor rose from his chair, and after steadily eyeing the guests all round with his dark gaze, he raised his glass and spoke :

"Our illustrious host, the Duke of Requena, has just told us, with a modesty which does him credit, that the whole secret of his great fortune lies in industry and honesty. He must permit me to doubt it. The Duke de Requena represents something more than those vulgar qualities; he represents force. Force! the sustaining factor of the Universe.

"Force is very unequally distributed among organic beings; some have a larger and others a smaller share. And in the ceaseless struggle which goes on among them, the weakest perish, the fittest and strongest survive. Let us, then, adore in our Amphitryon the incarnation of Force. Thanks to the force with which Nature has endowed him, he has been able to subjugate and utilise the smaller share of thousands of individuals who unconsciously serve his ends; thanks to that force, he has accumulated his vast capital.

"As I look round on this distinguished company, I observe with pleasure that all who compose it have also been endowed with a good proportion of this force, either congenital or inherited, and I can but congratulate them with all my heart. The only essential thing in the world we live in, is to have been

born fit for the struggle. We must crush if we would escape being crushed. And, I may add, I also congratulate myself on standing here face to face with so many chosen of the gods on whom Providence has set the seal of happiness."

"Hear him, my dear!" whispered Pepa Frias to Clementina. "This is Mephistopheles' toast, I think."

Clementina smiled faintly. In fact, the doctor's pale, refined face, with the black hair brushed off his forehead, and, above all, his black eyes, in spite of an assumption of innocence, were full of a bitter irony not unworthy of Mephistopheles.

He went on:

"Slavery has existed in every age under one form or another. There have always been men designated by fate to live in the refined atmosphere of intellectual enjoyments, in the cultivation of the arts, in luxury and splendour, and the pleasure to be derived from the society of intelligent and educated persons; while others again are fated to procure them the means of such an existence by rude and painful toil. The pariahs laboured for the Brahmins, the helots for the Spartans, the slaves for the Romans, the villeins for their feudal lords. And is it not the same to this day? Of what avail are laws to abolish slavery? The men who work in the depths of this mine, and inhale the poison which kills them, are slaves, though not by law—by want of bread. The result is the same. It is the law of Nature, and so no doubt a holy and venerable law, that some must suffer for others to enjoy life. You, ladies, are the descendants of the noble Roman ladies who sent their slaves to these mines to procure them vermilion to beautify their faces, and of the Arabs, who used it to decorate the minarets of their palaces at Cordova and Seville. Ladies, I drink to you, my soul possessed by admiration and respect, as the representatives of all that is choicest on earth—Love, Beauty, and Pleasure."

Though the pledge was gallant enough, it seemed uncanny; some muttered disapproval, and the hostile feeling against the young doctor visibly increased. There were one or two who

ever to the struggles and obstacles which had hitherto embittered his life. Free henceforth from the service of sorrow, as are the immortals, he gloried in his apotheosis, majestically serene.

He, too, had seated himself next the idol of his heroic heart, and for some hours sat talking to her in dulcet tones—of English cobs, and of the great pitched battles which were being constantly fought in the municipal council, and in which he bore an active part; till the innocent child, soothed by the monotonous and insinuating discourse, closed her eyes, with her head thrown back against the cushion.

Maldonado remained awake, wide awake, thinking of his happiness. Rosy-fingered Aurora, stepping over the ridge of the distant Sierra, and flying swiftly across the wide plain, peeped through the blinds of the carriages, diffusing a dim and subdued light, and still he was hugging himself in contentment.

Esperancita opened her eyes and smiled at him with a tender smile which thrilled the deepest fibres of his lyric soul. At this instant a lark began to sing. In Ramoncito the god was each moment growing more distinct from the man; intoxicated with love and happiness he murmured into the girl's ear, in a voice tremulous with emotion, a few incoherent and ardent phrases, the expression of the divine madness. Esperanza shut her eyes again—to hear that music better?

When he had exhausted all the superlatives in the dictionary to describe his passion, the poetic young civilian thought to achieve the task of conquest by showing the damsel, as in a vision, all the glories he could shed upon her: "He was an only son, his parents had an income of a hundred and ten thousand reales* a year; at the next ensuing elections he intended to stand as canditate for Navalperal, where his family had estates, and if only he had the support of the Government he was certain to succeed. Then, as the Conservative party

* About £1100.

were greatly in need of new blood, he believed he should soon get an appointment as under secretary, and—who could tell?—by-and-by, at a change of Ministry, find himself entrusted with a portfolio."

The girl still kept her eyes shut. Ramoncito, more and more excited, when he had ended this catalogue of brilliant prospects, bent over her and whispered in impassioned tones: "Do you love me, dearest, do you love me?"

No answer.

"Tell me, do you love me?"

Esperancita, without opening her eyes, answered curtly:

"No."

CHAPTER XVI.

A DEPARTING SOUL.

A FEW weeks after this excursion, Doña Carmen's disease suddenly grew much worse. The physicians, indeed, had no doubt that her end was drawing near. She was in a state of complete prostration. Her face was so thin, that there seemed to be nothing left but the skin, and the large, sad, kind eyes, which rested with strange intensity on all who came near her, as if trying to read in theirs the terrible secret of death. And in view of her death, a thousand sordid feelings surged up in the minds of those who ought most to have sorrowed over it. Salabert reflected with indignation on the inheritance which was to pass to his daughter. He made fresh efforts to induce his wife to revoke her will, but without success. For the first time in her life, Doña Carmen showed great firmness of character. Though she was incapable of a revengeful sentiment, she perhaps felt bound by her desire to close her existence by an act of justice. A life of abject submission, during which she had never opposed the smallest obstacle to her husband's will, to his money-making schemes, or his illicit passions, had surely earned her the privilege of asserting her rights on her death-bed, and gratifying the impulses of her heart.

Osorio kept silent watch, with concealed greed, over the progress of her malady, looking to its termination as the end of his own difficulties. Doña Carmen would be released from her earthly husk, and he from his creditors. Clementina herself, the object of the tender soul's devoted affection, could

not help rejoicing ever the prospect of so many millions which were to drop into her hands. She did her best to silence her desires, and subdue her impatience; but, in spite of herself, a tempting fiend made her heart give a little leap of gladness, every time the anticipation flashed through her brain.

It was with infernal astuteness that Salabert set to work to infuse distrust into his wife's mind. Sometimes by insinuation, and sometimes by brutally broad hints, he poured the poison of suspicion into her soul. Clementina and Osorio were looking for her death, as for flowers in May. What airs they would give themselves when they had paid all their debts! And then they would live and enjoy themselves on her money.

The poor woman said nothing, indignant at these base inuendoes. But, nevertheless, in her soul, broken and saddened by suffering, the keen point of this envenomed dart festered deeply, though she strove to conceal her anguish. Every time Clementina came to see her—and towards the end this was twice a day—her stepmother's eyes would rest on hers in mute interrogation, trying to read in them the thoughts in the brain behind. This intent gaze embarrassed the younger woman, making her feel a perturbation, which, though slight, occasionally betrayed itself.

As her malady, increased, this anxiety on Doña Carmen's part became almost a mania. In the isolation of soul in which she lived, Clementina represented the one link of affection which bound her to life. It was because her stepdaughter had always been cold and haughty to every one else, that she had never doubted the sincerity of her love for her, and it had made her happy and proud. It had sufficed to indemnify her for the scornful indifference with which every one else had treated her. Now, the horrible doubt which had been forced upon her, filled her heart with bitterness. Such a spirit of goodness and love as her own craved to believe in goodness and love. The uprooting of this last belief made her heart bleed with anguish.

One evening they were alone together; Doña Carmen,

motionless in her deep arm-chair, with her head thrown back on the pillows, was listening to Clementina, who was reading aloud the pious history of the apparition of the Virgin of la Salette. Her thoughts wandered from the narrative; they were disturbed as usual by the fatal doubt, which tortured her more than even her acute physical sufferings. She could not take her eyes off Clementina's fair head, with the fixed look of divination peculiar to dying persons, as though she could read what was passing within, but without gaining the certainty she longed for. More than once, when the reader glanced up, she met that dull, grief-stricken gaze, and hastily looked down again with a sudden sense of uneasiness. A desire, a whim, had blazed up in the sick woman's mind, a feverish yearning such as dying creatures feel. She longed to hear her step-daughter quench, by some gentle word, the fearful pain of that burning doubt. Again and again the question hovered on her lips; invincible shame kept her from uttering it.

"Lay down the book, child, you are tired," she said at last. And her voice came trembling from her throat, as though she had said something very serious.

"You are, perhaps, of listening. I am not. I have a strong throat."

"God preserve it to you, my child," replied Doña Carmen tenderly, as she looked at her.

There was a brief silence.

"Do you know what I have been told?" she asked finally, with an effort, and her voice was so low that the last syllables were scarcely audible.

Clementina, who was about to read again, raised her head. The few drops of blood left in Doña Carmen's emaciated body suddenly rushed to her face and tinged it with a faint flush.

"I was told—that you wish for my death."

Clementina's rich blood now mounted in a tide to her cheeks and dyed them crimson. The two women looked at each other for a moment in confusion. At last it was the younger who exclaimed, with a dark frown;

"I know who told you that!"

And as she spoke the blood faded from her face again like a sudden fall of the tide. Her stepmother's retreated to her weary heart. She bent her head with its white hairs, and said:

"If you know, do not utter his name."

"Why not?" cried her wrathful stepdaughter. "When a father, with no motive whatever, solely for the sake of a few dollars, can insult his daughter and make a martyr of his wife, he has no right to claim either affection or respect. I say it, and I do not care who hears me. It is an infamous calumny! My father is a man who knows no God, no love but money. I knew that your will had alienated his love for me—if indeed he ever had any."

"Oh!"

"Yes, I knew it perfectly. But I never could have believed that it would lead him to do anything so vile as to calumniate me so cruelly. I confess to you that I have always loved you the most—oh, yes, much, much the most! I have no hesitation in saying so. Nay, I will say more: I have never really loved any one but you and my children. If this will is the cause of your doubting my love for you, destroy it, undo it, revoke it. Your love and your peace of mind are far dearer to me than your money."

Her voice thrilled with indignation. Her eyes were sternly fixed on vacancy, as though she could evoke the figure of her father and crush him to powder. At the moment she was ardently sincere. Doña Carmen's dim eyes grew bright with contentment as her daughter spoke. At last they glittered through tears as she exclaimed:

"I trust you, my child—I believe you! Ah, you cannot think what good you have done me!"

She seized her hands and kissed them fondly. Clementina exclaimed, as if ashamed:

"No, no, mamma! It is I who——" And she threw her arms round her neck.

They held each other in a warm embrace, shedding silent tears. It was one of the few occasions in her life when Clementina wept from tender feeling, and not from vexation of spirit.

But during the remaining days, though the memory of this scene was lively with them both, so, too, was that of the suspicion which had led to it. Clementina felt herself humbled in her stepmother's presence. Her attentions and endearments were now and then a little forced; she tried to efface the impression she still read in Doña Carmen's eyes. Then, again, fearing this might lead her to doubt her sincerity, she would suddenly cut them short, and assume a cold indifference. In short, a current of disquietude flowed between the two women, and caused them both much suffering, though in different ways, whenever they were together.

At last Doña Carmen took to her bed, never again to rise. Clementina spent the whole day by her side. The terrible end was near. One morning, between two and three, two of the Duke's servants gave the alarm to the Osorios. The Duchess was dying, and asked repeatedly for her daughter. Clementina hastily dressed and flew to the Requena Palace as fast as her horses could carry her. Osorio went with her. As they alighted they met the Duke, with an expression of scornful gloom.

"You are in time—oh, you are in time!" he growled, and he turned away without another word.

Clementina fancied the words were spoken with a malevolent sneer, and bit her lips with rage. The pitiable scene that met her eyes as she approached Doña Carmen's bedside pacified her for the moment. The poor woman's face was stamped by the hand of death; pale as a corpse, the nose pinched and white, the eyes glassy and sunk in a livid circle. Standing by her side was a priest, exhorting her to repentance. Of what? Her faithful maid, Marcella, stood at the foot of the bed crying bitterly, her face hidden in her handkerchief; and two other maids in the background looked on at the pathetic picture,

frightened rather than sorrowful. The physician was writing a prescription at a table in the corner.

On seeing her daugher the Duchess turned to look in her face with an anxious expression, and held out a hand to her.

"Come close, child," she said, in a fairly strong voice. And she took Clementina's right hand in her own thin, waxen hands, and said, with a fearful fixity of gaze:

"I am dying, my child, dying. Do you not see it? Only so long as you are not glad of it."

"Mamma, dear mamma!"

"Say that you are not glad," she earnestly insisted, without ceasing to look in her daughter's eyes.

"Mamma, mamma, for God's sake!" cried Clementina, both bewildered and alarmed.

"Say that you are not glad!" she repeated, with increased energy, even raising her head with a great effort, and looking sternly at her.

"No, my beloved mother, no. If I could save your life at the cost of my own I swear to you I would do so."

The dying woman's dim eyes softened; she laid her head on the pillow, and, after a short silence, she said, in a weak, quavering voice:

"You would be very ungrateful—very ungrateful. Your poor mother has loved you dearly. Kiss me, do not cry. I am not sorry to leave this world. What hurt me was the thought that you, child of my heart—you—oh, horrible to think of! How it has tortured me!"

The priest here interposed, desiring her to turn her mind from worldly thoughts. The sick woman listened with humility, and devoutly echoed the prayers he spoke in a loud voice. The doctor and the Duke came close to the bed, but, seeing that Doña Carmen was breathing her last, the physician took Requena by the arm to lead him out of the room. Doña Carmen's glazing eye wandered round the little group till it rested on Clementina, to whom she signed to come closer.

"God bless you, my child," she said, with a gaze fixed on the ceiling. "You are right to be glad at my death."

"Mamma, mamma, what are you saying?" cried Clementina, in horror.

"I am glad, too, glad that my death should be an advantage to you. If I could have given you all while I lived, I would have done it. It is sad, is it not, that I should have to die to make you happy? I should have liked to see you happy. Good-by; good-by. Think sometimes of your poor mamma."

"Mother, dearest mother!" sobbed the younger woman, dropping on her knees with a burst of tears. "I do not want you to die, no, no. I have been very wicked, but I have always loved you, have always respected you."

"Do not be foolish," said the dying woman, smiling with an effort, and laying her hand on the fair head. "I am not sorry if you are glad. And what does it matter? I die content to know that you will owe some happiness to me. Remember my old women in the asylum, be kind to them, and to Marcella, my good Marcella. Farewell, all of you. Forgive me any faults——"

Her voice failed, her breathing was hard and painful. The sobs of Clementina and Marcella were the only other sound. The Duke, trembling and shocked, was at last persuaded to leave the room.

Doña Carmen spoke no more. Her eyes closed, her lips parted, she lay quite still. Now and then she half raised her eyelids and looked fondly at her step-daughter who remained kneeling. The priest read on in a quavering nasal voice prayer after prayer.

Thus died the Duchess de Requena. Let her depart in peace.

For some days after, Clementina and her husband, in spite of their inextinguishable aversion, held long and repeated conferences. The great question of the inheritance united their

interests for a while. Clementina went every morning and evening to see her father, and Osorio too was a frequent visitor; they both were lavish of attentions to the old man, took pity on his loneliness, and made much of him. There was an affectionate familiarity in their demeanour which was highly becoming in a son and daughter who make it their duty to cherish a venerable parent in his old age. The Duke, on his part, accepted their care, watching them with an expression which was ironical rather than grateful. When their backs were turned to leave him, he gazed after them, slowly closing his eyes, and turned his cigar-stump between his teeth, while his lips sketched a sarcastic smile, which did not die away for some few seconds

But everything went on as before. Although the Duchess's will was incontrovertible, Salabert never said a word on money matters. He continued to manage the whole of the fortune, and engaged in various concerns with calm despotism. But his daughter and son-in-law were not so calm. They began, on the contrary, to be greatly disturbed, to express their opinions to each other with crude vehemence, and to lay plots to provoke an explanation. Clementina thought that Osorio should speak to her father. He considered it her part to apply to him in dutiful terms for an explanation, before formulating a complaint. After some days of hesitation the wife finally made up her mind to say a few words to her father, though not without some embarrassment, since she knew his temper and her own too.

"Well, papa," said she, with affected lightness, finding him alone in his room, "when are you going to talk over money matters with me?"

"Money matters? Why should I?" he replied in a tone of surprise, and looking at her with such an air of innocence that she longed to slap his face.

"Why should you? Because it will have to be done, to put me in possession of my property. Am I not mamma's sole legatee?" she answered in the same cheerful tone, but there was a very perceptible quaver in her voice.

"Ah, to be sure!" exclaimed the Duke, with a flourish of the hand to dismiss the subject. "We will talk of that later—much later."

Clementina turned pale. Her blood seemed to curdle with rage. Her lips quivered, and she was on the point of saying something violent.

"Still, it would be as well that we should come to an understanding," she murmured in a low voice.

"Not at all, not at all. I cannot discuss it now. When I have time and am in the humour I will think about it."

He spoke with such decision and indifference that his daughter had no choice but either to give the reins to her tongue and quarrel violently with her father, or to go. After a moment's hesitation she went. She turned on her heel, and, without a word of leave-taking, she quitted the room and went off in her carriage, in such a state of excitement that she was trembling from head to foot.

As soon as she reached home she shut herself up in her own room and gave vent to her fury. She wept, she stamped, she tore her clothes, and broke various articles of crockery. Osorio too flew into a rage, and declared he would bring Salabert to book. But nothing came of it all, excepting a letter, in which respectfully enough, he required his father-in-law to give him an account of the state of his business, that the preliminaries of an estimate might be arrived at. Salabert simply did not answer. They wrote another; again no reply. They ceased going to the house. Clementina would not go for fear of a scandal. Osorio, on his part, considering the relations that subsisted between him and his wife, did not feel that he had the moral position which would entitle him to lay formal claim to her fortune.

In this predicament they consulted certain persons of weight, friends of the Duke, and requested them to mediate. This was done; they had various interviews with the old man, and after much consultation a friendly meeting was agreed on, to avoid bringing the matter into a court of law. The meeting

was held, after some objections on Clementina's part, at her father's house. Besides the interested parties, there were present Father Ortega, the Conde de Cotorraso, Calderón, and Jimenez Arbos.

The proceedings were opened by Arbos—no longer in the Ministry, but a member of the Opposition—who made a speech in a conciliatory key, urging them to agree rather than present to the public the spectacle of a quarrel on money matters between a father and daughter—a spectacle which, in view of the position they held, must be both painful and discreditable. The next to speak was Father Ortega, who, in the unctuous and persuasive accents which characterised him, first bestowed on both parties a plentiful lather of preposterous encomiums, and then appealed to their Christian feelings, representing how bad an example they would set, and painting the sweets of loving-kindness and self-sacrifice, ending by promises of eternal life and glory.

Clementina replied. She had no wish but to continue in the same friendly relations with her father as had hitherto subsisted, and to achieve that end she was prepared to do all in her power. The curt, dry tone in which she spoke, and the scowl which accompanied her words, gave no strong evidence of sincerity. However, the Duke seemed greatly moved.

"Arbos," he began, "Father, my friends, and my children; you all know me well. To me, without domestic life, there is no possibility of happiness. After the terrible blow I have so lately suffered, my daughter is all that is left to me. On her centre all my hopes, my affections, and my pride. For her I have toiled, have struggled indefatigably, have accumulated the capital I possess. I may say that I have never cared for money but for the sake of my wife, now in glory, and my daughter—to see them living in comfort and luxury. As you know, I could always have lived on a few coppers a day. And now that I am old, all the more so. What can I want with millions? Ere long, I too must take the train for the other side—Eh, Julian? And you too.—Who then can suppose that

I should ever quarrel over a handful of dollars with my dear and only daughter? The whole thing has been a mistake. I wanted time to put my affairs in order; that was all. And if you, my child, ever could imagine anything else, I can only tell you this: everything in this house is yours, and always has been. Take it whenever you choose. Take it, my child, take it. I can do with nothing."

As he pronounced the last words with visible emotion, they all were able to shed a tear. Every one was deeply moved and eager with conciliatory exhortation. Father Ortega gently pushed Clementina into her father's arms; and though she was the least agitated of the party, she allowed him to embrace her.

He clasped her to his heart for some minutes, and when he released her dropped into his arm-chair, with his handkerchief to his eyes, quite overcome by so much emotion.

After so pathetic a scene no one could allude to money. The meeting broke up with fervid hand-pressing and warm mutual congratulations on the happy issue of their diplomacy. But Osorio and his wife got into their carriage, grave and sullen, and exchanged not a single word on the drive home. Only as they reached their own door, Clementina said:

"Well, we shall see how the farce ends."

Osorio shrugged his shoulders.

"We have seen the end, I suspect."

And he was right.

The Duke never paid them a cent., and never again spoke of his daughter's fortune. He was very affectionate, and constantly had them to dine with him, complaining of his loneliness. Now and then he spoke of transactions he was engaged in, but not a word of paying them their share. Clementina was at last so much provoked that she suddenly ceased going to the house. They then took to exchanging notes. Nothing was to be got out of her father but ambiguous replies and vague hopes. Finally they decided on taking legal steps, and a lawsuit began, which was a source of endless satisfaction to the faculty.

This was an end of all joy or comfort for Clementina. She lived in a state of perpetual ferment, watching the progress of the litigation with anxious interest, communicating with the lawyers, and trying to exert some influence which might counterbalance the Duke's. He, on his part, took the matter much more calmly, conducted it with maddening acumen, taking advantage of her displays of violence to represent her in the eyes of the world as a greedy and unnatural daughter. At the same time, among his intimate acquaintances, he would now and then give utterance to some sarcastic or cynical speech which, when it reached her ears, made her wild with rage. The struggle became more desperate every day, while, on the other hand, Osorio's creditors, deceived in their hopes, began to press him very hard, and threatened to bring him to ruin. The torments, the tempers, the wretched state of things in the Osorio household may be easily imagined.

This discomfort, and it might be called misery, extended to the hapless Raimundo. Clementina, torn soul and body by a tumult of other passions, found no leisure for the blandishments of love. The minutes she could spare for them were every day briefer and less calm. The gay *tête-à-têtes* and merry devices of a former time were over for ever. The lady no longer found any amusement in laughing at her boyish lover. She did not seem even to remember the childish pleasures in which they had delighted. She could talk of nothing now but the lawsuit. Her nerves were in such a state of tension that an inadvertent word might put her into a furious rage. And, besides all this, in her vehement desire for triumph over her father, she flirted more than ever with Escosura, who had just come into office; and this, as may be supposed, was what most distressed the young naturalist.

One day, when she was rather more fond than usual, she said in loving accents:

"You are still jealous of Escosura, Raimundo? But it is quite a mistake. I do not care a straw for the man."

"Yes, so you have often told me, and yet——"

"There is no 'and yet' in the case, fastidious youth!" she interrupted, gently pulling his ear. "I never loved, and never could love, any one but you. But—here comes the but—you alas! are not in power, though you deserve to be more than any one I know. My fortune, as you know, is at the mercy of the law, and I may be told any day that I am a beggar. Accustomed as I am to comfort and luxury, you may imagine how much I should relish this. And my pride, too, would suffer, for I am the object of much invidious feeling; people hate me without knowing why. In short, I should be laughed at, and that I could not endure. My father has a great many supporters. Men count on him for services, though he is utterly incapable of a kindness, and they are afraid of him too. Now I, though on intimate terms with all the official circle of Madrid, have not one true friend to take a real interest in my affairs, or dare to show a bold front to my father. And so, you see, I must try to make one. Now imagine this friend to be Escosura, and imagine me to break with you before the eyes of the world, though still you are the one and only man I can ever love. What do you think of the arrangement? Can you regard it as acceptable?"

Raimundo coloured crimson at this strange and humiliating proposition. For a minute or two he made no reply, but at last he said, between anger and contempt:

"It strikes me as simply infamous and indecent."

The furrow, the fateful furrow, which appeared on Clementina's brow whenever passion stirred her stormy soul, was ominously deep. She abruptly rose, and after looking at him hard, with an expression of scornful rage, she said in icy tones:

"You are right. Such an arrangement could not meet your views! We had better part, once for all." And she turned to go.

Raimundo was confounded.

"Clementina!" he cried as she reached the door.

"What is it?" said she, as coldly as before, and looking round.

"Listen, one moment, for God's sake! I spoke under an impulse of jealousy, not meaning to wound you. How could I ever mean to hurt you when I love you, adore you as a creature of another sphere?" and he poured out words of tenderness and worship.

Clementina listened without moving from her attitude of haughty indifference, and would not melt till she saw him utterly humbled, on his knees before her, beseeching for the scheme he had stigmatised as infamous and indecent as a favour to himself.

At this time Clementina received a blow which almost made her ill. Her father brought the audacious woman to whom he had given a card for his ball to live in the palace, and this extraordinary proceeding became the talk of all Madrid. Every one believed that Salabert was out of his mind. And then a rumour got afloat that he was about to marry Amparo, and amazement and indignation filled the soul of Society.

But an unforeseen accident interfered with this alliance. At a meeting of the shareholders of the Riosa mines it was the Duke's part, as chairman, to give an account of his management, and propose certain measures for the advantage of the company. He usually fulfilled such functions with great brevity and lucidity; he was, above all else, a man of business, and had no fancy for rambling speeches or more words than were absolutely necessary. But now, to the surprise of his audience, among whom there were many bankers and official personages, he began a rambling address quite foreign to the matter.

He wandered from his subject and began giving explanations of his conduct as a public character, sketched a complete biography of himself, dwelling on a thousand insignificant details; sang his own praises in the most barefaced way, putting himself forward as the model of a logical politician, and of disinterested self-sacrifice; spoke of his services to the nation by his loans to the Government in the hour of need, and to the cause of humanity by his co-operation in the founding of

hospitals, schools, and asylums; finally having the audacity to assert that the Home for Old Women was his work.

The shareholders looked at one another in bewilderment, muttering not very complimentary comments on the orator's condition of mind. When he had finished the catalogue of his own merits and proclaimed himself, *urbi et orbi*, the greatest man in Spain, he began an invective against his enemies, describing himself as the victim of persistent and deliberate persecution, of a thousand intrigues plotted to discredit him, and in which various political and financial magnates were implicated. In confirmation of this statement he read, in loud, fierce tones, certain articles from a paper published in the district where the Riosa mines were situated, and which, according to him, constituted a gross and shameful attack. What they actually said amounted to this: That Salabert was not a man of such mark as to be worthy to have a statue.

His hearers, more and more wearied and indignant, now said, though still in under-tone: "The man is crazy! The man is mad!"

As he read on, his face grew purple; it was usually pale, it now looked as if he were being strangled. Suddenly, before he had finished, he fell back senseless in his chair.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DARKENED MIND.

After this attack Requena's mental faculties were perceptibly weakened, as every one could discern who saw him. He suffered from strange illusions; his speech was slow and even less intelligible than of old. He was full of fancies and whims. It was said that he had given his mistress vast sums of money; that he flew into a rage over the merest trifles, and shrieked and raved like a mad creature, going so far as to inflict bodily injuries on his servants and attendants; that he ate voraciously, and would say the most horrible things to his daughter. His sullen and vindictive temper had become violent and malignant.

In business matters, however, his faculties showed no signs of deserting him, nor had the mainspring of his nature, avarice, run down. His affairs, to be sure, for the most part went on by themselves, and he still had Llera, whose talents as a speculator had gained in astuteness. Where the derangement, or rather the weakness of his mind, was most conspicuous, was in his domestic affairs. His mistress reigned supreme, and as in Madrid there is no lack of social parasites, there were plenty of hangers-on to sing her praises. She gave tea and card parties, and though the society she collected left much to be desired in point of quality, in appearance it made as good a show as that of many another wealthy house. There were Grandees of Castile who honoured her with their presence, among them Manolo de Davalos, as mad and as much in love as ever.

The lawsuit between the Duke and his daughter ran its

lengthy course, each party more obstinate and more virulent every day. In fact, to Clementina, it had resolved itself into a personal struggle with Amparo. The thing which she and Osorio most dreaded was that her father should commit himself to the marriage which was openly prognosticated. If he did, this hussy, an ex-flower-girl, would flaunt the ducal coronet, and treat with them on equal terms. Though society at first would have nothing to say to her, everything is forgotten in time, and Amparo would presently be regarded as a Duchess indeed. Happily for them, though Salabert was very submissive to her vagaries, they heard that the Duke had positively refused to marry her, and that when she endeavoured to coerce him, there were violent scenes between them. Whether all that the servants reported were true or no, there was no doubt that she was urgent and he obstinate. But though her attacks continued to be fruitless, Clementina and Osorio lived "between the devil and the deep sea." The Duke was pronounced to be suffering from creeping paralysis. Under these circumstances, after consulting several eminent lawyers, they determined to petition the Court for a decree pronouncing him incompetent or incapable of managing his own affairs. He had, lately, it was said, had a fresh attack, which had left him quite imbecile. This report seemed to be confirmed by his never leaving the house, and by his most intimate friends being refused admittance to see him. It was under these circumstances that, either from some sudden impulse of her impetuous nature, or because some of her acquaintances had suggested it to her, Clementina determined to deal a decisive blow, which would at once put an end to the litigation and to all the difficulties bound up with it.

"My father is shut up," said she, "I will go and turn that woman out of the house."

Her husband tried to dissuade her, but in vain.

One morning, therefore, she drove to her father's palace. The porter, on opening the gate to the Señora Clementina, was at once amazed and pleased; for though she was neither so

smooth-tongued nor so liberal as the ex-florist, a sense of justice led the Duke's household to respect his daughter and contemn his mistress. The haughty lady, without looking at the man, merely said :

"Well, Rafael?" and went quickly up the steps.

"How is papa?" she asked of the servant who met her in the hall.

He was too much astonished to be able to reply.

"Well, fellow!" she repeated impatiently, "Where is papa? In the office, or in his study?"

"I beg your pardon, Señora; the Duke is well. I think he is in his study."

At this juncture, a waiting-maid, who had caught sight of her from the end of a passage, and heard her inquiries, flew off to warn the Señora, while Clementina hastened up the stairs to the first-floor. But before she could reach her father's room, the lady in possession stood in her path, looking straight into her face, with flashing eyes.

"Where are you going?" she asked, in a voice husky with excitement.

"Who are you?" asked Clementina, lifting her head with supreme disdain, and looking down on her.

"I am the mistress of this house," was the reply, but the speaker turned pale.

"The sick nurse, you should say. I never heard that there was a mistress here."

"What! Have you come to insult me in my own house?" exclaimed Amparo, setting her arms akimbo, as if she still were on the market-place.

"No. I have come to turn you out, before the police arrive and do it for me."

Her antagonist made a movement, as though she would fall on her and rend her; but she checked herself, and began to scream as loud as she could: "Pepe, Gregorio, Anselmo! Come here, come all! Turn this insolent creature out of the house! She is insulting me."

Some of the servants came at her call; but they stood confused and motionless, contemplating this strange scene. At the same moment the door of the Duke's room was opened, and Salabert stood before them in a dressing-gown and cap. He had grown terribly old in a few weeks. His eyes were dull, his face colourless, his cheeks pendant and flabby.

"What is all this? What is the matter?" he asked thickly. On seeing his daughter, he staggered back a step.

"This woman," cried Amparo, in a yell of vulgar rage, "after having you declared an idiot, comes here to insult me!"

"Papa, do not heed her," said Clementina, going up to him.

But her father drew back, and holding out his trembling hands he exclaimed: "Go—go away! Do not come near me!"

"Listen to me, papa."

"Do not come near me, wicked, ungrateful child!" repeated the Duke, in a quavering voice, but with melodramatic emphasis.

"Yes, leave this house, shameless creature," added the woman, encouraged by the old man's attitude. "Dare you show your face here, after treating your father so?"

Clementina stood petrified, colourless, staring at them with a look of terror rather than anger. For an instant she was on the point of fainting away; everything seemed to be whirling round her. But her pride enabled her to make a supreme effort; she stood rooted to the spot, and incapable of moving, as white as a marble statue. Then she turned on her heel slowly, for fear of falling, and reached the stairs, down which she went, almost tottering at each step. Her father, spurred by Amparo's cries, followed her to the top of the flight, repeating with increasing fury:

"Go—go. Leave my house!" And he held up a tremulous hand in theatrical menace.

His mistress, meanwhile, poured forth a string of abuse

with an accompaniment of gestures, sarcastic laughter and gibes, learnt and remembered from her early experience.

By the time Clementina had reached the garden, her cheeks were tingling. She leaned against the pedestal of one of the lamps for a minute to recover herself, and then ran like a mad creature to the gate, where her carriage was waiting; she sprang into it and burst into tears. On reaching home she was lifted out in a miserable state, and helped up to her room by two maids. When Osorio came up, it was only in broken and incoherent sentences that she could tell him what had occurred.

She kept her bed for eight or ten days in a state of utter prostration, and she rose from it at last so possessed by the desire for revenge, that she really seemed to have gone mad.

The lawsuit, under the hot breath of her malice, was fanned to an imposing blaze. It was regarded in Madrid as a matter of public interest. The opinions of the most distinguished physicians, Spanish and foreign, were taken on both sides as to the Duke's mental incapacity. On one part he was pronounced an idiot, so hopelessly childish that there was nothing to be done with him; on the other it was asserted that he was mending steadily, his mind clearer every day, and his intellect a marvel of acumen and sound sense. And on one point all the authorities concurred—namely, in requiring enormous fees. The press took sides with one or the other party. Clementina subsidised one or two papers. Amparo had bribed others, for the Duke, as a matter of fact, was incompetent to direct the case. And through their columns the two women, more or less disguised, contrived to hurl insolence at one another, reviving, in an allegorical dress, an extensive selection of scandalous tales.

In this warfare the daughter had the worst chance. She could not be so liberal as the mistress, who sowed bank-notes broadcast. On the other hand, Clementina had the support of her husband's creditors, and of her friend Pepa Frias—who was

indefatigable in her visits to the doctors, the lawyers, and the newspaper editors—the Condesa de Cotorraso, the Marquesa de Alcudia, her brother-in-law, Calderón, General Patiño and Jimenez Arbos; and, more helpful than all these, as in duty bound, her lover *en titre*, Escosura. He, holding a post of high importance, had no small influence on the course of the lawsuit.

What a life of excitement, anxiety, and misery! Clementina could not eat, she could not sleep. She was always holding conferences with lawyers and judges, always writing letters. Even at her parties and dinners, nothing else was talked about, till at length the more indifferent of her acquaintance rebelled, and ceased to come. To others, however, she communicated some of her own flame; they became her ardent partisans, and brought or carried reports, volunteered advice, broke out in cries of indignation whenever Amparo was even mentioned. And although Clementina's haughty temper prevented her being a favourite in Madrid society, as she stood forth, after all, as the representative of justice and decency, her cause found most supporters. To this her antagonist's folly contributed, for she paraded herself and her splendour everywhere, with the imbecile and degraded old man.

The Duke was in fact perishing before their eyes. After a stage of excitement and violence, when he had behaved like a madman, came a period of nervous prostration; by degrees he became almost idiotic. He lost his wits so completely that he could not even understand business. Everything was left to Llera. This would have been all right, but that Amparo would interfere and do all kinds of mischief. She took the greatest pains, however, to hide Salabert's condition; on days when he was over excitable or incoherent, she kept him in his room. It was only when he was calm and rational that she ventured to take him out, and then never allowed him to talk to any one. But her efforts were not always successful. Salabert went out by himself on various pretences, and amply betrayed his deranged condition. On one occasion he was

found outside the town at four in the morning. Another time he went into a jeweller's shop, and after ordering some trinkets he pocketed some others, believing he had not been observed. The jeweller had seen it, however, but he said nothing, knowing the millionaire. He sent the bill in to Amparo, who hastened to pay it, and went in person to beg that the matter should not be divulged. In short, before long it was established beyond a doubt, in spite of the contending evidence of physicians, that the Duke was absolutely *non compos;* and it was said that the lawsuit would be decided in that sense.

Two days before the decision was made public, Amparo vanished from the Requena palace, after sacking it very completely, and carrying off with her many objects of great value. Her savings already amounted to several thousand dollars, and in anticipation of disaster she had drawn the money out of the Bank of Spain and placed it in foreign securities. She was afterwards heard of in France, and a few months later it was reported in Madrid that she had married the crazy Marquis.

On the very day of Amparo's flight—for it may be called a flight—Clementina and her husband took possession of the Requena palace. She found her father in a pitiable state of total imbecility. He spoke as though they had met but the day before and nothing of any importance had occurred, he asked for Amparo, and sometimes mistook his daughter for her. The daughter's heart, it must be owned, was not severely wrung. This catastrophe by no means satisfied the bitterness which possessed her soul when she recalled all the wretchedness she had endured. Her vengeance was incomplete, for Amparo was rich and content. She longed to prosecute her as a criminal, while Osorio, satisfied with the enormous fortune which had dropped into his hands, did not regard her thefts as worth a thought.

The Duke de Requena, the famous financier who for twenty years had been the wonder and admiration of the banking

world in Spain and abroad, the man who had been so much discussed by the public and the press, was ere long, in his own house—now the Osorio palace—a useless and worthless chattel. To avoid comment, or to be more secure as to his condition, or perhaps out of some dim fear lest he should recover, the Osorios did not send him to a lunatic asylum; they had him cared for at home. Salabert was no more than a child. He thought of nothing but his meals. He spoke very little, but sat hour after hour, looking at his nails or rubbing one hand over the other, now and then uttering some strange, inarticulate cry. He was in the charge of an attendant, who, when he was tiresome, would fly in a rage and slap him. But the person he held in most respect, it may be said in real awe, was his daughter. It was enough for Clementina to frown and speak a scolding word; he submitted at once. For his son-in-law, on the other hand, he did not care a pin.

When his attendant found him quiet and went to amuse himself for an hour with the other servants, the crazy old man would wander about the house, more especially to gaze in the mirrors. His principal mania was for picking up pieces of bread and storing them in a corner of his room, where they lay till they were mouldy. When the pile was too large the servants cleared it away in baskets and flung it out on the dust-heap. Then when he missed it he was furious, and his keeper had to use strong measures to pacify him. One morning, soon after the Osorios' breakfast—the old man ate alone in his own room—three or four of the servants were together in the great dining-room, cleaning the plate and putting it away in the side-board cupboards. They were in high spirits and playing games, hitting each other with the long loaves they had taken up for sticks, running round the table and laughing loudly. Their mistress was upstairs and could not hear them. Suddenly the old imbecile appeared on the scene, with the tray on which he was wont to carry off the broken pieces as a precious booty to his room. He had on a greasy old shooting coat, and his head was bare. And, in spite of its white hairs,

that head was not venerable; the yellow unshaven cheeks, the colourless, loose lips, the stony, expressionless eyes had no trace of the beauty of old age, but only the decrepitude of vice, which is always repulsive, and the stamp of idiotcy which is always terrible.

Seeing so many persons, he paused a moment, but he made up his mind to come in, and went straight to the drawers of the side-board, where he began an eager search, picking up every scrap he found there and collecting them on the tray. The servants watched him with amusement.

"Hunt away, old fellow!" cried one. "When are you going to ask us to try the broth, daddy?"

The old man made no reply, he was much too busy.

"The broth, sir," said another, "you had better ask us to share a ten dollar-note."

"I shall not ask you," mumbled the Duke with some irritation, "I shall only ask Anselmo."

"Oh yes, we know why you ask Anselmo, it is because he keeps the stick! Never fear, if that is all, you shall ask me too."

The others all shouted with laughter, and the youngest, a boy of about sixteen, seeing him with his tray filled, and about to depart, slipped behind him and, giving him a jerk, upset all the bits, which were scattered on the floor. The Duke's rage was terrific, with yells of rage he went down on his knees to pick them up again, while the servants applauded the joke. As soon as he had collected them all again on his tray, and was shuffling off as fast as he could to escape from their rough fun, the same fellow again came behind him and snatched it away. The madman's frenzy was indescribable; gnashing his teeth and glaring with fury, he rushed on the lad, but the others seized him. The poor lunatic began to utter cries which were anything rather than human.

At this moment Clementina's voice was heard in high wrath:
"What is the matter? What are you doing to papa?"
The servants let him go, and vanished from the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PASSION BURNT OUT.

RAIMUNDO'S love affairs hung only by a thread. In these latter days Clementina, entirely absorbed by her triumph and thirst for revenge, had hardly given him a thought. They still met frequently, for the young man did not cease to visit her, but their love-passages were fewer every day. If he timidly complained of her neglect, the lady excused herself on the score of Escosura's jealousy. It was in vain that she had tried to persuade him that she was "off with the old love." "And you see," she said "if he finds out that I have deceived him, he will have good cause for a furious scene."

Raimundo was so utterly lost that he admitted, or feigned to admit, this reasoning as valid. Through this abject humiliation he still contrived to be happy in the illusion that his idol preferred him, loved him best at the bottom of her heart, that she only flirted with the Minister for the sake of her lawsuit. Clementina fostered this belief by sending him from time to time, when she could forget her vexations, a few lines appointing a meeting, "to day at four," or "this afternoon in our rooms." And at these interviews she would make him as happy as of old by swearing eternal fidelity.

But all joys are brief in this world; Raimundo's were brief indeed. The very next day, after some such meeting, he would find his mistress as cold as marble, disdainful of him, and, what was worse, absorbed in conversation with Escosura, in a recess of the drawing-room. He had innocently believed that the end of the lawsuit would restore his happiness, that Clem-

entina, no longer needing the great man's help, would again be wholly his. But his hopes were blown to the winds like smoke. The lawsuit was decided in her favour, but far from dismissing her official cavalier, she showed him greater respect and affection.

One morning, two months after the close of the business, he received a note from Clementina, saying:

"Meet me at two this afternoon."

His heart leaped for joy. It was more than a fortnight since Clementina had given him rendezvous at their little *entresol*. By one o'clock he was there to wait for her, and as soon as he saw her from afar he ran to open the door with as much agitation as though she had been a queen, and far more tender devotion. She seemed grateful and affectionate, and accepted his passionate caresses with gracious kindness.

But after they had chatted for about an hour, as they sat side by side on the sofa, she looked at him with a slow, compassionate gaze, and said:

"Do you know, Mundo, that this is the last time we shall ever sit here alone together?"

The youth looked at her in speechless amazement; he did not, he would not, understand.

"Yes, I cannot keep up this mystery any longer. Escosura is very indignant, and with reason. Besides, I am ashamed—it is horrible of me. And, after all, you have nothing to complain of. I have always been nice to you. If I ever loved a man truly, it was you, and the proof of it is that it has lasted so long. But nothing in this world can last for ever, and as matters stand we had better part. You see, Mundo, I am growing old—you are but a boy. If I did not break with you, sooner or later you would throw me over. Such is life. Though you still think me handsome, these are but the last remains of beauty. I must bid farewell to all the follies we have indulged in together, but I shall always look back on them with pleasure. I swear to you that you will always symbolise to me the happiest period of my life. So now, henceforth, we will

still be good friends. It will always be a satisfaction to me to be able to serve you, for I owe you many hours of happiness."

The young man listened to this cruel speech, motionless and stricken. His face was perfectly colourless.

"Do you mean it?" he said at last, in a husky voice.

"Yes, my dear boy, yes. I mean it," she replied, with the same sad, patronising smile.

"It is impossible! It cannot be!" he exclaimed vehemently, and starting to his feet he looked down on her with a mixture of horror and indignation.

This expression in his eyes roused her pride.

"But you will see that it can be!" she retorted with a touch of irony which was the height of cruelty.

He stood frozen for a moment, gazing at her with intense anguish, then he fell on his knees at her feet, with clasped hand, imploring her:

"For God's sake, do not kill me! Do not kill me!"

Clementina's face softened, and her voice broke a little.

"Come, Mundo," said she, "do not be a baby. Get up. This had to come. You will find other women far more worthy than I."

But the young man held her knees clasped, kissing them in a frenzy of grief, his whole frame shaken by sobs.

"This is horrible, horrible, horrible!" he kept saying. "Oh! what have I done that you should kill me with misery?"

"Come, come," she said, gently stroking his hair. "Get up, be reasonable. Do you not see that this is ridiculous?"

"What do I care?" he cried, his face hidden in her silk skirts. "For you I would be ridiculous in the eyes of the whole world."

Clementina tried to soothe him, but without any emotion or pity. There is no wild beast more cruel than a woman whose love is satiated. She let his grief have its way for a while, and when he grew calmer she rose.

"I am grateful to you for all this feeling, Mundo. I, too,

have gone through a terrible struggle before I could make up my mind to part."

"It is false!" cried Raimundo, still kneeling, with his elbows on the sofa. "If you still loved me, you could not be so cruel, so base."

Clementina stood silent for a minute, looking at his shoulders in great irritation. At last, touched by pity, she said:

"I forgive you the insult in consideration of the agitation you are in. Though you may abuse me you will still be able to think of me with affection; and even when you have quite forgotten me, the memory of your face and the happy hours we have passed together will remain engraved on my heart. But now we must come to an explanation," she added, in a sterner tone. "Let us be worthy of each other, Raimundo. You must, please, take a hackney coach to your house and bring me back every line I ever wrote to you, that we may burn them. I have none of yours; you know I always destroyed them immediately."

Raimundo did not stir. After waiting a few moments she went up behind him, leaned over him, and laid her hands on his cheeks, saying kindly:

"Foolish boy! Am I the only woman in the world?"

He thrilled at the touch of those soft hands, and, turning suddenly, seized them and covered them with kisses, pressed them to his heart, laid them on his brow.

"Yes, Clementina, the only woman; or, if there are others, I do not know them—I do not want to know them. But is it true? Is it true that you do not love me?"

And his tearful eyes looked up at her with such an expression of woe that she could not but lie.

"I never said I did not love you, but only that we can meet no more—like this."

"It is the same thing."

"No, it is not the same thing, foolish boy. I may love you, and yet, in consequence of special circumstances, I may not be able—we cannot have everything we wish for in this world."

And she wandered into incoherent argument and specious reasoning, which she knew was false, and could not utter without hesitancy; the same commonplaces, repeated in different words, trying to give them the weight they lacked by emphasis and gesticulation.

But Raimundo was not listening. In a few minutes he rose, dried away his tears, and left the room without a word. Clementina watched him in surprise.

"I will wait for you," she called after him into the passage.

Twenty minutes later he returned, carrying a parcel.

"Here are your letters," he said with apparent calm, but his voice was thick and his face deadly pale.

Clementina glanced at him keenly, not without some uneasiness. But she controlled herself, and said simply:

"Thank you very much, Mundo. Now, we will burn them, if you please, in the kitchen."

He made no reply. They went together to the cold, unfurnished kitchen, which no one ever used, and Clementina, with her own hand, laid the packet on the hearth. But suddenly, just as she was about to strike the match which Raimundo had given her, she paused. Then she said, with a smile:

"Do you know that this is dreadfully prosaic? To burn my love-letters on a kitchen hearth! It seems to me that they might have a more romantic end. Shall we go and burn them in the fields? That will give us a last walk together and a fitter parting."

"As you please," he said, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Very well. Fetch a carriage."

"I kept one."

"Then come."

Raimundo took up the packet of letters, and together they quitted the room whither they were never to return.

The hackney-coach carried them along the road to the eastward. It was an afternoon in Spring, misty and fresh. Clementina had closed the blinds for fear of being seen; but when they were outside the Alcalá gate she asked Raimundo

to let them down. Unluckily the moment was inopportune, for at that very moment they met an open carriage, in which sat Pepe Castro with Esperancita Calderón, now his wife. She had barely time to lean back in the corner and cover her face with her hand, and even so was not sure that they had not recognised her.

Raimundo, by a great effort, had recovered some self-control, but not completely. Clementina did all she could to divert his mind, talking to him, like a friend, of indifferent matters, of their acquaintances, and taking it for granted that he would continue to visit at her house. When Castro and his wife had gone past she discussed them with much animation.

"You see, I was right, Mundo. They have not been married three months, and Pepe and his father-in-law are squabbling over money matters. No one knows Calderón better than I. If he does not die before long, the poor children will be dreadfully hard up, for they will never get any money out of him."

Raimundo replied to her remarks, affecting a calm demeanour, but there was a peculiar accent in his voice which the lady could not help noticing. It seemed foggy, as though it had passed through many tears.

At last, in a very deserted spot, they bid the driver stop, and got out.

"Wait for us here; we are going for a little walk," Raimundo explained.

But then observing a doubtful glance in the man's eyes, he turned back when he had gone a few steps, and taking out a five-dollar note he handed it to him saying:

"You can give me the change presently."

They turned off from the high road and wandered away over the dreary deserted fields which stretch away to the east of Madrid. The ground is slightly undulating, but burnt and barren, cutting the horizon with a long level line—not a house, not a tree was in sight. Clementina's dainty shoes sank in the dust as they walked on in silence. Raimundo had no spirit to

talk, and she, too, was oppressed by the sadness of the little drama, to which that of the landscape contributed; she had enough good feeling not to speak a word. Now and then she looked back to assure herself whether they could still be seen from the high road. When she thought they had gone far enough she stopped.

"Why should we go any further?" she said. "Will not this place do?"

Raimundo also stopped, but made no answer. He dropped the parcel on the ground and looked away—far away to the horizon. Clementina untied it, looked with some curiosity at her letters, all carefully preserved in the envelopes; then she made a little heap of them, and after waiting a minute or two for Raimundo to look round, finding that he did not move, she said:

"Give me a match."

The young man obeyed, and gave it her lighted, in perfect silence. Then he looked away again while Clementina set fire to the papers, and watched them burn one by one. The process took some minutes, and she had to turn the blazing fragments with her gloved hands to prevent their remaining half-burnt. Now and then she cast a half uneasy, half pitying glance at her lover, who stood as motionless and absorbed as a sailor studying the signs of the weather.

When nothing remained but black ashes, Clementina rose from her stooping posture, waited a moment, not liking to intrude on Raimundo's deep abstraction, and at last, with a cloud of tender pathos on her beautiful face, hastily looked about her, went up to him, and laying her arm on his shoulder, said in a fond tone:

"And now that we are alone for the last time, shall we not bid each other a loving farewell?"

"How ought we to part?" he replied, looking at her and making a great effort to smile.

"So!" she exclaimed, and she threw her arms round his neck, and covered his face with passionate kisses.

Raimundo stood rigid. He let her kiss him many times, like an inert creature, and then his knees failed, and with a heartrending cry:

" Oh Clementina, this is death!" he fell senseless on the ground.

She was terribly frightened. There was no one to help; no water near. She raised his head, resting it on her lap, fanned him with her hat, and held a scent-bottle she had with her under his nose. He presently opened his eyes, and could soon stand up. He was ashamed of his weakness. Clementina was most affectionate and helpful. As soon as she saw that he was in a state to walk, she took his arm and said:

"Let us go."

And she tried to amuse him by talking of a little dance she meant to give, to which she urgently pressed him to come; he was on no account to fail her.

"And on Saturdays, as usual, you know. You are to be sure not to desert me. In my house you will always be what you have been—my friend; and in my heart, so long as I live, you will fill the dearest place."

Raimundo's only answer was a forced smile.

Thus they made their way back to the spot where they had left the coach. As they drove back, still she talked, while he, as they got nearer to the town, turned even paler than before; nor could he even smile.

Seeing him thus, with despair in every feature, Clementina at last ceased talking so lightly, and, moved with pity, she again kissed him tenderly. But he shrank from her touch; he gently pushed her away, saying:

"Leave me alone—leave me. You only hurt me more."

Two tears rose to his eyes and remained there without falling. At last they dried away, or returned to the hidden fount whence they had sprung.

They reached the Alcalá gate once more. Clementina bid the driver stop at the corner of the Calle de Serrano:

"You had better get out here. You are close to your own house."

Raimundo, speechless, opened the door.

"Till Saturday, Mundo. Do not fail me. You know I shall look for you." And she grasped his hand tightly.

He, without looking at her, merely said:

"Good-bye."

He sprang out. The lady saw him walk up the street, staggering like a drunken man, and he did not once look round.

THE END.

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

THERE is nothing in which the Anglo-Saxon world differs more from the world of the Continent of Europe than in its fiction. English readers are accustomed to satisfy their curiosity with English novels, and it is rarely indeed that we turn aside to learn something of the interior life of those other countries the exterior scenery of which is often so familiar to us. We climb the Alps, but are content to know nothing of the pastoral romances of Switzerland. We steam in and out of the picturesque fjords of Norway, but never guess what deep speculation into life and morals is made by the novelists of that sparsely peopled but richly endowed nation. We stroll across the courts of the Alhambra, we are listlessly rowed upon Venetian canals and Lombard lakes, we hasten by night through the roaring factories of Belgium; but we never pause to inquire whether there is now flourishing a Spanish,

an Italian, a Flemish school of fiction. Of Russian novels we have lately been taught to become partly aware, but we do not ask ourselves whether Poland may not possess a Dostoieffsky and Portugal a Tolstoï.

Yet, as a matter of fact, there is no European country that has not, within the last half-century, felt the dew of revival on the threshing-floor of its worn-out schools of romance. Everywhere there has been shown by young men, endowed with a talent for narrative, a vigorous determination to devote themselves to a vivid and sympathetic interpretation of nature and of man. In almost every language, too, this movement has tended to display itself more and more in the direction of what is reported and less of what is created. Fancy has seemed to these young novelists a poorer thing than observation; the world of dreams fainter than the world of men. They have not been occupied mainly with what might be or what should be, but with what is, and, in spite of all their shortcomings, they have combined to produce a series of pictures of existing society in each of their several countries such as cannot fail to form an archive of documents invaluable to futurity.

But to us they should be still more valuable. To travel in a foreign country is but to touch its surface. Under the guidance of a novelist of genius we penetrate to the secrets of a nation, and talk the very language of its citizens. We may go to Normandy summer after

summer and know less of the manner of life that proceeds under those gnarled orchards of apple-blossom than we learn from one tale of Guy de Maupassant's. The present series is intended to be a guide to the inner geography of Europe. It offers to our readers a series of spiritual Baedekers and Murrays. It will endeavour to keep pace with every truly characteristic and vigorous expression of the novelist's art in each of the principal European countries, presenting what is quite new if it is also good, side by side with what is old, if it has not hitherto been presented to our public. That will be selected which gives with most freshness and variety the different aspects of continental feeling, the only limits of selection being that a book shall be, on the one hand, amusing, and, on the other, wholesome.

One difficulty which must be frankly faced is that of subject. Life is now treated in fiction by every race but our own with singular candour. The novelists of the Lutheran North are not more fully emancipated from prejudice in this respect than the novelists of the Catholic South. Everywhere in Europe a novel is looked upon now as an impersonal work, from which the writer, as a mere observer, stands aloof, neither blaming nor applauding. Continental fiction has learned to exclude, in the main, from among the subjects of its attention, all but those facts which are of common experience, and thus the novelists have determined

to disdain nothing and to repudiate nothing which is common to humanity; much is freely discussed, even in the novels of Holland and of Denmark, which our race is apt to treat with a much more gingerly discretion. It is not difficult, however, we believe—it is certainly not impossible—to discard all which may justly give offence, and yet to offer to an English public as many of the masterpieces of European fiction as we can ever hope to see included in this library. It will be the endeavour of the editor to search on all hands and in all languages for such books as combine the greatest literary value with the most curious and amusing qualities of manner and matter.

EDMUND GOSSE.

DATE DUE

